

April 6, 2020 - Holy Monday

To the Indigenous Churches and Disciples Across the Land:

Dear Relatives,

As we begin Holy Week, I am writing as your National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop to help us all to live the life of Christ in this time of pandemic crisis. I know that many of you are in lockdown and all of us are taking care to not receive or pass on the virus. Having spoken to many of our leaders and elders across the Land, I am also aware that many church services have been stopped or limited in the number who can be involved. Many of our elders have spoken of times like this in the past. We have also heard of dreams and prophecies regarding the event we are facing now. In all cases, the word we are hearing from God is to pray, to stay together in the communion of the Spirit and the practice of our faith, and to protect life. We are convinced that God has a way to Resurrection for us in this time. We will follow Jesus in that way.

To act in unity and communion, I would like to ask you to help me and all of us in these ways:

1 - Seek and Trust God. This is the most important thing of all. In the midst of many pressing, urgent, and dangerous demands, some people forget the priority of Spirit in this life. In my experience, the elders never forget that. Jesus teaches us that we must seek first the power, love, and grace of the World to Come, the Kingdom of God, and all other things will follow in a good way.

2 - Protect Life. - Already, we are hearing of communities that are dealing with this virus. If it breaks out in others, it will be devastating. I have consulted with our Indigenous elders, Indigenous bishops and clergy, and other leaders over the past few weeks. We have all concluded that, for the sake of the elders and other vulnerable ones, we must implement action that will keep people safe. In different diocese you may have different guidelines - some have said worship only in groups less than 10, some only in groups of 5 or less, some restrict it completely - and you must all restrict your gatherings to what is safe and what your leaders advise. The most painful aspect of this is funerals, as we have heard from all discussions. The consensus is absolutely clear, however, that we must limit our funerals to small groups of immediate family at the graveside, celebrating our memorials later, when it is safe. With this consensus, I must ask you, as the National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop, acting with the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous House of Bishops Leadership Circle, to put

these safeguards in place as you undertake our usual and constant spiritual care for those passing from this life to the next and for the loved ones they leave behind.

3 - Be Disciples. In the past few years, we have felt an urgent call to put the Gospel in the centre of the Sacred Circle of our life in family, church, and Creation. This has prepared us to meet this challenge and to move forward in our faith and in our community with each other. Wherever two or three are gathered - many in their families during this crisis, some on the phone and others on the internet - we should put the Gospel daily before us, placing it in that Sacred Circle where Jesus promised he would meet us if we would gather in his Name. Many of you are using Gospel Based Discipleship with great impact in these days, as I am. Let this be our lifestyle.

4 - Pray for Creation and Humanity. Scripture and our elders tell us that prayer is something that has a powerful impact on Creation. In fact, Creation and all of humanity depend on it. Our prayer, our ceremonies, our services do something in the universe and, as Jesus showed us when he broke the bread and shared the cup, Holy Communion or the Eucharist is a part of the reconciliation of heaven and earth. It brings the New Creation here, as we wait for its full coming in the World to Come. Elders are going out on the Land to pray; our clergy, lay readers, and church leaders must say their daily prayers, joining with them. With the approval of your bishop, meet in safe numbers - often only your family - and, as many of you have already said you are doing, say the prayers and ceremonies of the church. Plead with God, intercede through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the Land and the People. Now is an hour to step forward in love for all of our people and all of Creation.

Many of you have joined me in dedicating and consecrating our Lenten fast to a healing of the Land. In these last days of our Lenten Fast, the Holy Week and Holy Walk to the Cross and Resurrection, I will be joining you all in the fast, in putting the Gospel in the centre of our Sacred Circle, and in the daily Eucharist. I ask you to walk with me and all our peoples. We will know, this is absolutely sure, the power that raised Jesus from the dead. The God who showed power by becoming weak, will show power in pandemic.

Blessings,

The Most Rev. Mark MacDonald
National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop