



To the United Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

**Pastoral statement from the Bishop
17 March 2020**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

Today the College of Bishops decided that collective worship should cease in our churches until further notice. We are concerned to follow the directions and advice that we are receiving from many sources, including the Scottish Government. We have made this decision for the good of us all. We now enter a time that will be strange in so many ways, we have not had to live like this before.

Even though we will not worship together, we are not disappearing. We will be Christ's Church in and from our own homes. For the next weeks, and maybe months, we will be church in a different way. We will not be able to gather together, but for every one of us Christian life and ministry continues. In fact, how we live and minister through these next weeks will be very important indeed.

This is an opportunity for us to make sure that we stay connected to each other and to God. When we say our prayers at home, we will know that many others will be doing the same thing. We will be able to phone (text, message, skype and face-time) each other. Those of us that are able will be offering practical help to those who have had to isolate themselves, for example through shopping, all following the government guidelines and directions of course!

In many, many ways the shape of our lives will change through the next few weeks. At the other side of this we and our churches will not be the same. We have the possibility of learning a great deal about ourselves, about the world in which we live and to which we are so intimately connected, and about God. I pray that the Holy Spirit will be our companion through the weeks ahead.

Further practical guidelines will follow, for the pastoral ministry of priests, deacons and lay-readers, and for Vestries, who will have to be planning together for a period where some of those who carry responsibilities have to isolate themselves. If you have any questions, or want to tell me how you are getting on, I will be pleased to hear from you. I can be contacted at:

bishopanne@aberdeen.anglican.org

or telephone 07739 395769

Today we commemorate St Patrick, so I end by reminding you of the prayer associated with him. Let this be our prayer today.

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me,
Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort me and restore me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me, Christ in the hearts of all that love me,
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.

+Anne, Aberdeen and Orkney.