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Tuesday 31 May 2016

Dear friends of the churches of the regional ministry model in the Deanery of St. Francis:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

This is my first opportunity to formally greet you since becoming your coadjutor bishop less than a month ago. I was able to see many of you at the wonderful ordination service at the cathedral on Ascension Day, and I've already had the chance to visit some of you in your churches in the deanery. I look forward to eventually visiting every church.

I am aware that just as I begin serving you as coadjutor bishop, you are beginning a time of transition. The Rev. Canon Lynn Dillabough has accepted a call to serve as the incumbent of St. Paul, Brockville, in the Diocese of Ontario, beginning August 1.

Lynn and her many gifts for ministry will be deeply missed in the Diocese of Quebec, and especially in the churches of the Deanery of St. Francis. As Deanery Coordinator, an Education for Ministry mentor, a trainer of lay readers, a counsellor and a pastor, Lynn has touched many lives and made a lasting impact in the six years she has served among us. As a newly ordained priest she took on the multifaceted challenge of an emerging new model of ministry with enthusiasm, and in the process has helped our church develop ways to remain viable and vital in a new context.

I've had the particular opportunity to observe Lynn's talents as a fellow member of her doctor of ministry cohort at St. Paul University in Ottawa, where she has been evaluating the experiences and lessons learned from her work in your deanery in an attempt to help other small but faithful Christian communities elsewhere benefit from your experience. Her research and reflections—which are the fruits of your collective labour as priest and people—will be a gift to the whole church.

We will have a chance to express our appreciation for Lynn's ministry and to bid her Godspeed at a farewell service (followed by cake and ice cream) at St. Augustine, Danville, on Sunday 26 June at 2:30 p.m. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Even as we prepare to say farewell to Lynn, we also need to look toward ensuring the continuation of the ministry of which she has been a part. Bishop Dennis, who remains our diocesan bishop, has delegated me to help oversee this process, the first steps of which I will outline here.

The canons of our diocese, which help order our common life as a church, state that “appointments to parishes shall be made by the bishop following consultation with the parish and recommendation from the Diocesan Executive Council” (Canon 13, 1.C.).

Because a new priest will be appointed to assist in serving the entire “new model” of the deanery—which at present consists of 15 individual parishes—we will necessarily need to engage in a collective consultation, which is very much in keeping with the intended spirit of the new regional ministry that has been developing in the Eastern Townships.

To that end, the Deanery Ministry Committee (DMC) meets this month to discuss how best to proceed with such a collective consultation with each of the congregations participating in the regional ministry model. When the DMC has made its recommendations in this respect, we’ll be able to proceed to the next steps of the appointment process.

I am aware of the desire among many of you for the period of time between the conclusion of Lynn’s ministry and the appointment of her successor to be as short as possible. It is my hope and expectation that a new priest will be serving the regional ministry in the Deanery of St. Francis no later than January 1, 2017.

Until that happens provisions are being made to ensure the worship life and pastoral care of the regional ministry continues.

For administrative purposes, after Lynn’s departure and until a new priest is appointed, Archdeacon Edward Simonton will serve as interim incumbent of the parishes which Lynn has overseen, and will also take additional services.

I am grateful to Archdeacon Richard Salt, a former priest of our diocese who has retired to North Hatley, for generously agreeing to help preside at Sunday services during this in-between time. I will also be helping out in this way, and look forward to worshipping with you and visiting some of your churches this summer and fall. You will continue to be served by your faithful group of deanery worship leaders and lay readers, who also have my sincere thanks.

Requests for pastoral care can be directed to Archdeacon Simonton. Those in and around Bury and Cookshire can also contact Jane Bishop. Marilyn Mastine is available to those seeking pastoral care in the Richmond and Danville areas. Their contact details are available through your local congregation.

Transitions like this are not always easy, and the coming weeks will doubtless bring with them a range of emotions: grief, worry, uncertainty, hope, expectation. My prayer is that those feelings will eventually be crowned with joy at the arrival of your new priest.

In the meantime, pray for Lynn as she concludes her time among us and prepares for a new ministry among a new people in a new place. Pray also that the Holy Spirit may lead us and a new pastor for your deanery to find each other—and do so with confidence in Jesus’ promise to his disciples as they faced their own uncertain time of leadership transition: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Yours in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers OGS
Bishop Coadjutor