**ST. BARNABAS CHURCH**

**640 chemin Sherbrooke**

**North Hatley, QC J0B 2C0**

March 23 rd, 2015.

Dear fellow parishioners,

There was a special Vestry held on March 1st 2015 to adopt a resolution to start the process of discernment in our parish.

Father Edward Simonton, the Archdeacon of the Deanery of St-Francis and Ruth Sheeran, the Rural Dean were present to explain this process of discernment and to outline in general terms the model of shared ministry of the Deanery.

With the retirement of our Vicar David Oliver, St-Barnabas once again faces many challenges.

As with other parishes in the Diocese, the attendance and giving at St-Barnabas has continued to decline. The result is we simply no longer can afford a full time Incumbent. In order to survive and hopefully prosper, we must explore other alternatives.

Edward and Ruth explained the Deanery Model of shared ministry that is presently in place in fifteen parishes in the St-Francis Deanery. Without going into great detail, it is evident this model has been successful as congregations have experienced renewal, outreach has increased substantially and most importantly, members of once declining congregations now feel they are part of a renewed and vibrant community.

Edward in his attached letter to us covers a lot of territory with regard to his perception of our congregation. He sees the dynamics of a congregation that is not as healthy as it should be. The reasons, as he points out are many and as your wardens we do agree with many of his observations. Why such disharmony exists in our Parish is truly unfortunate and serves no purpose but to undermine what our congregation should aspire to be. A giving community of Christians with an Anglican vocation helping to support our fellow brothers and sisters and disavow any contradiction thereof.

St-Barnabas is at a crossroads as we need fresh ideas and renewed purpose. We all know our Parish has been well endowed and for that we are truly blessed. However, it is our responsibility as stewards of this gift to now use it for what it was originally created, that is to reach out to the less fortunate in our greater community. We can no longer think of St-Barnabas in terms of being just a beautiful little country Church serving a dwindling year round congregation with a small surge in the summer.

We can longer hope to survive by expending our energy in fruitless efforts to follow ways that are stagnant and at times regressive.

By going forward into a new model, our energies will surely be channelled in productive ways and our long term survival will be better assured.

We invite you to read and to reflect upon the enclosed documents namely : **Edward’s letter to us, The Archdeacon’s Winter Letter, The Final Report of the Deanery Ministry Committee and the Minutes of the St-Barnabas Special Vestry Meeting of March 1st, 2015.**

We think you will find the contents of these documents very encouraging in providing us with hope as we undertake this very important process.

The next step is to schedule another special Vestry planned for April 12th, 2015 to ratify the resolution and formalize the discernment process. After David Oliver’s departure, we will have Communion every second Sunday and Morning Prayer the other two Sundays during the discernment process. This is the same formula presently in place in the Deanery Model.

In closing, it must be clear that each parishioner will be heard in an open and respectful manner. We invite you to attend meetings and participate in this very important process.

All communications will be announced in Church, be posted on the St-Barnabas website and on the notice board. As well, you can ask the Wardens.

Thank you.

Sincerely.

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Joan Drinkwater Peter Provencher

Rector’s Warden People’s Warden.