



ANGLICAN DIOCESE MONTREAL  
The Very Reverend Mary Irwin-Gibson  
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September 24, 2015

RE: Pastoral letter from Bishop-Elect Mary Irwin-Gibson

Dear Archdeacon Linda, Corporation & Parish of St James the Apostle

One of the great joys of beginning episcopal ministry here in my home Diocese of Montreal, is to see the creative and honest work of our parishes in rethinking ministry for the future of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am so grateful for the ministry that has taken place at St. James the Apostle since its inception. It is with that thanksgiving in mind that I write to underline what I see as the current situation at St James the Apostle.

Following the collective recent awareness of deep financial concern and a corresponding three year consultation period initiated jointly by you and the Diocese, a number of creative options for the future have been considered. While some of those ideas have merit in isolation, we have not uncovered an option which also had long-term operational or financial longevity. In other words, there were many good ideas but none which we had sufficient reason to believe would really, truly work. I applaud the work of the Corporation in understanding this reality only after a long period of careful listening and prayer. Even as we look ahead to a bright future, I join with you in the sadness that after all of your efforts and commitment, we have come to this moment.

As a result of the conclusions of your study and the corresponding emptying of the parish purse, it is with great seriousness that I am writing to support a decision that you face, in asking for the operations of St James' to be suspended and closed as of Christmas 2015. Legally, this means that what is known as parish operations and financial responsibilities ends & closes, even as we prepare for something new.

It is in light of that new idea that this otherwise serious and sad task, is filled with new joy. Thanks to the prophetic and creative voices that Bishop Barry and I have heard from your parish, we have been able to direct a new initiative we had been considering, to the parish of St James. This new 'church plant' would be taking a blank sheet and starting again to think about the ministry opportunities we have at St James and with a particular aim at reaching young families and individuals in the area, while respecting and engaging the traditions of our past. The model which suits this best comes from a number of other Anglican global-city-centre parishes and I believe has every chance of bearing fruit in the form of many souls coming to know our Lord Jesus Christ.

The shape and timing of this new endeavour needs some further work and I look forward to announcing more to you in due course. If you would like a simple guide on this I would say that we are talking about a significant new and more modern form of ministry - this is an 'all change' moment



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which is only being undertaken after much consultation with you, Episcopal Council and also other Downtown clergy.

This new model may not be for everyone and to that end I have accepted Archdeacon Linda's intentions to draw to a close her chapter of ministry at St James. It is with a joyful sense of God's purposes that Linda does so, in that she is aware of more of the fulness of the plans we are in the process of committing to. I am appointing Amy Hamilton as my Bishop's Chaplain through the intervening time between the closure of the church at Christmas 2015, and the startup of new ministry in the Spring of 2016.

For now, I invite you to support this news which I know will come with some sadness and even a short period of confusion. The reason I invite you is the awkward reality that completely irrespective of any new plans, the current chapter at St James' has come to its natural end. I do understand that a number of options involving the sale of sections of property have been considered and on that particular subject I want you to know that from my experience and research from other Dioceses, the sale of the hall is not a long-term solution for St. James.

Considering all of this information, I encourage you in the following ways:

- to make every preparation for the closure of the church by 31st December 2015.
- to join with me in making preparations to allow our various charitable and regular users of the church hall to continue to do so. We will be reviewing all of these arrangements but our intention is to do everything possible to maintain them.
- to resolve at your special vestry to approach this change with gladness and thanksgiving, rather than any form of negativity which may in actual fact prevent us from providing to St James a new and hopeful plan for the future.
- to be patient as we prepare details of a new plan and to pray earnestly for the gift of the Holy Spirit for us all as we discern how to move forward

I look forward to being with you at the Special Vestry on 18th October when I will be able to share more of what I hope could be accomplished at St James. Keeping in mind the many emotions that I know you will have, I hope to be a pastor to you as we face both a daunting and deeply exciting future.

Let us all join in prayer to our Mighty God as we consider the future of the historic and significant ministry site that we collectively steward.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop-Elect Mary Irwin Gibson  
Diocese of Montreal

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