

Contact

A Newsletter for the Council of the North

Advent 2020

Responding to God's Call to mission and ministry in the northern regions of Canada



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Bishop Annie Ittoshat, originally from the northern community of Kuujjuarapik, is a newly elected bishop in the Diocese of the Arctic and minister of St. James Anglican Church in Salluit, Quebec.

Bishop and minister

A conversation with Bishop Annie Ittoshat of the diocese of the Arctic

By Matt Gardner for *Contact*

THE FIRST FEMALE Inuk priest in Nunavik, Annie Ittoshat was elected a suffragan bishop of the Arctic on March 28, 2019, and consecrated on March 31. Originally from the northern community of Kuujjuarapik, she is a graduate of John Abbott College and Wycliffe College and obtained her M.Div in the diocese of the Arctic.

Ittoshat previously worked as Aboriginal community minister for the diocese of Montreal and as a priest at the Church of the Epiphany in Verdun, Quebec. She is currently a resident of Salluit, Quebec, in the Ungava Deanery, where in addition to her duties as bishop she serves as a minister at St. James Anglican Church. Ittoshat is currently

“We were told that not only are we going to be bishops, but also minister for the community we are based in. That’s been one of the challenges that I’ve been facing is having to hold two jobs, as a bishop and a minister.”

—Bishop Annie Ittoshat

a member of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples.

Contact spoke with Bishop Ittoshat on Oct. 13 to learn about recent

developments and ongoing concerns in the diocese of the Arctic. This article has been edited for brevity.

Q. How has your episcopal ministry been going since you were consecrated?

A. With this unexpected pandemic, COVID-19, it’s been a challenge. But at the same time, the challenge that I’ve been facing is when we were elected as bishops, we were told that not only are we going to be bishops, but also minister for the community we are based in. That’s been one of the challenges that I’ve been facing is having to hold two jobs, as a bishop and a minister.

I wish we had someone to work with, to show us the ropes of what it means to

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PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Salluit, Quebec is a community of approximately 1,500 people near the Hudson Strait in the north east region of Nunavik.

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be a bishop. That's one of the challenges that I have. But other than that, it's alright.

Q. Have you found an atmosphere of support among the House of Bishops?

A. Yes. That's what I find.

Q. What are your current priorities as bishop?

A. With the other job that I have as a minister, we've been here since over a year in Salluit, because we lived in Montreal for five years. Coming back up north to this community, Salluit, it keeps me busy. But at the same time, [I'm] trying to get to know the people and where I'm at, at the moment.

As a bishop, there are 13 communities in Nunavik and there's the Hudson Coast and the Ungava. On the Hudson Coast we have Manasee Ulayuk as a regional dean. Annie Keenainak was the regional dean for the Ungava; we lost her as a regional dean because she went back to school. With the short staff for the ministers, that's one of the challenges

“At the beginning when we got hit by the COVID, the [worship] services were through the local radio. Each community has its local radio, so that's what we did at the beginning. There are some churches that are opening now.”

—Bishop Annie Ittoshat

that we have. At the moment, Manasee is the regional dean for both sides, Hudson Coast and Ungava Coast.

Manasee had taught the lay leaders on the Hudson Coast, so there's going to be another one in November on the Ungava Coast. Training for sure is one of our priorities. That's what we've started, but COVID-19 has slowed things down. So we have another training [session] on the Ungava Coast.

Q. What kind of impact has COVID-19 had on ministry in your area?

A. At the beginning when we got hit by the COVID, the [worship] services were through the local radio. Each community has its local radio, so that's what we did at the beginning. There are some churches that are opening now. Here in Salluit, we have our services now on Sundays and Wednesdays. There were a few who did [worship] online. But in our area, it was mostly local radio.

When we started hearing [about] the second wave of this pandemic, there were, I believe, two communities that had one [person] each who had COVID. But they're all clear now, so there's nothing at the moment in Nunavik.

Q. Anything else you'd like Anglicans to know about how things are going in the diocese?

A. Not only in my area, but [across] the diocese of the Arctic, one of the big challenges that we have is lack of ministers. We could use prayers concerning this. 🙏

Contact is produced by the Council of the North

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The Anglican Church of Canada

‘The call from our Lord hasn’t changed’

A conversation with Bishop Joey Royal of the diocese of the Arctic

By Matt Gardner for *Contact*

JOEY ROYAL WAS elected as a suffragan bishop for the diocese of the Arctic on March 28, 2019 and consecrated three days later. He lives in Iqaluit, Nunavut, where he has also served as director and primary instructor at the Arthur Turner Training School since 2016.

A graduate of Providence University College and Theological Seminary in Manitoba, Royal previously served as the rector at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Yellowknife before relocating to Nunavut. He is a regular contributor to *Covenant*, the blog of the Living Church Foundation.

Contact spoke with Bishop Royal on Oct. 5, 2020, to learn about new developments in the diocese and upcoming plans. This interview has been edited for brevity.

Q. How are you handling episcopal ministry in the time of COVID-19?

A. Well, it’s strange. I think a lot of people are finding the shakeup that it has brought is strange, and it’s unprecedented, and it’s uncertain. But at a deeper level, I think the call from our Lord hasn’t changed. Jesus still calls us to follow him and to live a life of the Spirit, and, as we can, to be the church. I think the challenge is at the institutional level—how to still gather and keep people safe and how to administrate the diocese in a challenging time.

Some churches are starting to reopen now, but they’re following strict guidelines. It may seem a little over-the-top given we have no cases. The reason we have no cases is because there’s been such a lockdown. People are wearing masks and we’re following government



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Bishop Joey Royal

“I think the challenge is at the institutional level—how to still gather and keep people safe and how to administrate the diocese in a challenging time.”

—Bishop Joey Royal

guidelines on capacity, and we’re not doing the Eucharist and we’re keeping tabs on who’s coming in and out and all that. Administratively, it’s quite a shakeup, it definitely is. There’s no question.

Q. What are your current priorities in the diocese of the Arctic?

A. They’re the same, really. They haven’t changed in terms of our basic mission, which is to proclaim Jesus Christ, to make him known. That’s been what we’re doing all the time. Honestly, people use Facebook and each community has a local radio station. Ministry has happened on the radio for years, or online. What has changed is the limitation on gathering together, which is tough. It’s especially tough, I would say, with funerals and so on. But our mission’s the same.

Where it’s difficult is internet is weak in certain communities, phone can be not great, and so the remoteness can mean certain challenges. But they’re challenges that are not new. Trying to communicate across vast distances and cross-culturally and with different languages, these are not new challenges in the church. They’ve been there since Day 1.

In a sense, we’re in a new situation. In another sense, it seems new because I think we often operate with a very limited sense of history. But the church has lived through pandemics. The church has lived through challenges of various kinds, even more severe challenges than we have now. Although it feels unique to us, and it is in some ways, the church has faced challenges like this and has overcome greater ones than these by the power of God—by the power of God, always.

Q. Have you noticed more people coming out to online worship services than previously attended in-person worship?

A. What I’ve heard a lot from different priests and lay leaders is especially with online ministry, they’re seeing people

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THE COUNCIL OF THE NORTH is a grouping of financially assisted dioceses, supported through grants by General Synod, that serve sparsely populated areas in the Arctic, Yukon, Northern and Central Interior British Columbia, Alberta, northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba; and northern Ontario.

Specifically:

- Diocese of the Arctic • Diocese of Athabasca • Diocese of Brandon • Diocese of Caledonia • Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh • Diocese of Moosonee • Diocese of Saskatchewan • Territory of the People • Diocese of Yukon •



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Students of the Arthur Turner Training School with Bishop Joey Royal (centre)— From left to right: Martha Kunuk, Esau Tatatoapik, Nina Kautuq, Sarassie Arragutainaq, Manasee Ulayuk, Annie Keenainak.

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that have either had no involvement in the church or else had kind of drifted away. They're seeing people come back.

I've heard that also from other bishops across the church. That's a really interesting thing and quite noteworthy, and I think we'll be thinking about this for a long time. There are causes for celebration and reasons for encouragement in all this, and I think reaching new people is a good thing.

Q. How are things going at Arthur Turner Training School?

A. Good. We've got three students now. The reason there's less than last [year] is not because less people applied, it's because we still struggle to secure housing. But we have three, and because it's a small enough [group], we can do so with proper social distancing measures and all that.

It's going well. I'm really encouraged, and I'm really encouraged by what the graduates in the last class have done. One of the students is now down at Wycliffe College in Toronto. The others are doing really great ministry across the Arctic and are ordained.

The three now I think will be a wonderful addition to the diocese. All the students are Inuit who are bilingual. They all speak English and Inuktitut,

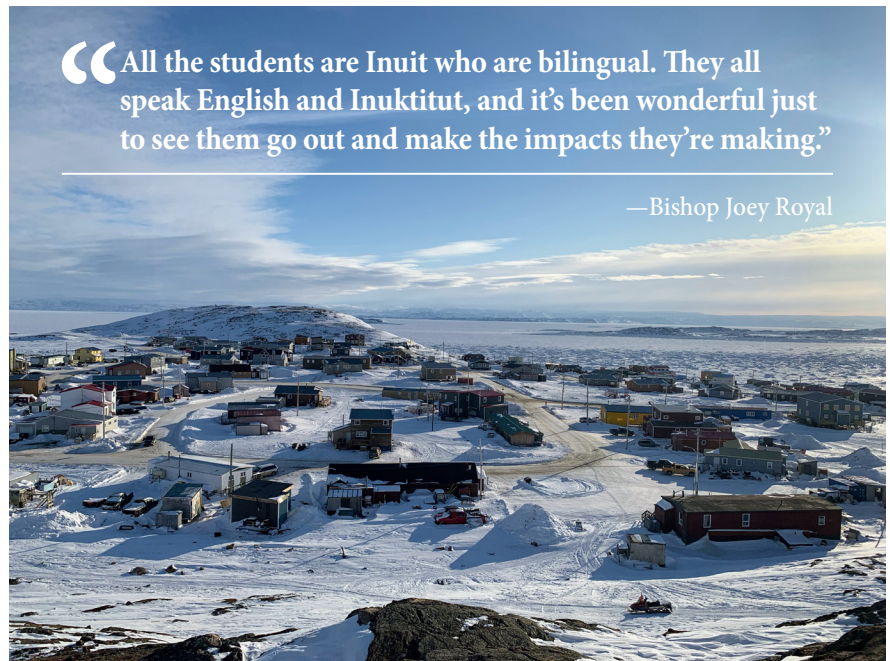


PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Iqaluit, Nunavut, where Bishop Joey Royal ministers.

“All the students are Inuit who are bilingual. They all speak English and Inuktitut, and it's been wonderful just to see them go out and make the impacts they're making.”

—Bishop Joey Royal

and it's been wonderful just to see them go out and make the impacts they're making.

Q. Anything else you'd like Anglicans to know about the diocese of Arctic?

A. Even though we are geographically remote, all who claim the name of Christ are one, so I just want the people in the

south to be assured of my prayers. I would value their prayers as well, and I do hope that whatever comes out of this that we will be drawn into deeper union with our Lord and also deeper unity with one another in the name of Christ.

I think the question is, what is God doing through this? That's always, I think, the question to ask. What is God doing in and through this? Ω

‘My priority is for everyone to have Christ’

A conversation with Bishop Lucy Netser of the diocese of the Arctic

By Matt Gardner for *Contact*

Lucy Netser was elected as a suffragan bishop for the Arctic on March 28, 2019, and consecrated on March 31. Before becoming a priest, Netser spent three decades as an active participant in the Woman’s Auxiliary/Anglican Church Women of Canada. She currently lives in Arviat, Nunavut, where she serves as lead pastor at St. Francis’ Church in addition to her duties as bishop and as regional dean for the Kivalliq deanery.

Contact spoke with Bishop Netser on Oct. 14, 2020 to learn about recent developments and ongoing concerns in the diocese of the Arctic. This interview has been edited for brevity.

Q. How has your episcopal ministry been going since your consecration?

A. Busy, because I also look after a parish. So I’ve been much busier now, meeting with bishops across Canada and our diocese’s bishops.

Q. How are you balancing your work as a bishop and your work as a pastor?

A. I have good helpers. If I have to go somewhere, then I just get someone to replace me.

Q. What are your current priorities as bishop?

A. My priority is for everyone to have Christ. I want everyone to get to know God and have him as a personal saviour. I like to get all the parishes all the information that they need to know, because some of them are unilingual in Inuktitut.

Sometimes I have to explain in Inuktitut to some unilingual people that are leading in the communities, or if someone is not too sure about something, then I tell them in Inuktitut. I like all the people that didn’t really know what to do to find out what their responsibilities are and what their requirements are. These are my priorities.



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

L-R: Bishops Lucy Netser, Annie Ittoshat, and Joey Royal at their consecration on March 31, 2019.

“My priority is for everyone to have Christ. I want everyone to get to know God and have him as a personal saviour. I like to get all the parishes all the information that they need to know, because some of them are unilingual in Inuktitut.”

—Bishop Lucy Netser

Q. Are there any efforts to develop more resources in Inuktitut or hire additional clergy who speak the language?

A. I wish that was possible. There are so many people that don’t want to be priests because they don’t want to be away from family, and some of them have kids and kids don’t want to go, you

know, these things.

I would like to see lots of priests everywhere. There’s a lot of work, but not enough workers.

Q. What kind of impact has COVID-19 on ministry in your part of the diocese?

A. The first three months [of the pandemic], March, April, May, we couldn’t really do anything at all—no church and no church services. All the events that were going on in the church were cancelled. We couldn’t do that anymore.

The only thing that we could really do was to go on the local radio. They have it open for the leaders in the church to go on the radio and hold services that we have for churches here in Arviat, where I am. These four churches, they’re welcome to be at the radio station. So we were at the radio stations, all four of us, on Sundays or during the week.

We also would hold prayers through CB [radio] ... and livestream services on Facebook. I’ve learned how to use livestream; I didn’t have a clue before that. I will be alone or have someone

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sitting quite far from me in the church and I would do the services, at least once every Sunday, if I didn't go on the radio.

There are a lot of people using Internet. But the majority of people in town here are Inuktitut-speaking. Even if they had Internet, they can't understand what is being said or how to go on a livestream if you don't have a Facebook account or Messenger, that sort of stuff. A lot of people don't have Internet.

Q. Are you doing in-person worship anywhere now?

A. We're doing services now. We just were able to go in the church for Nunavut. At first, for Nunavut, we were doing services with masks on, and it was quite difficult for some people who had breathing problems or people that can't really have their faces covered.

But right now, as of last Sunday, we now can have services without a mask on. We can sing now. But the limit is 75% of the capacity of the church. So there have been people going to church. Kids weren't allowed to go to church [as of] the 10th of March. Now kids just started going there when the mask [requirement] was lifted.

Q. Anything else you'd like Anglicans



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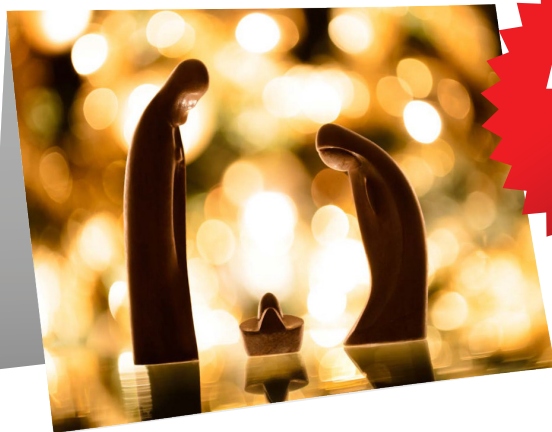
Arviat, in the Kivuaqq region of Nunavut, is a community of approximately 2,600 people situated on the west shore of Hudson's Bay.

to know about what's going on in the diocese?

A. The diocese of the Arctic is a vast land. From way up there down [south], the only transportation we can use is the airplane, and it's very costly.

Some people don't understand why there are three suffragan [bishops] besides Bishop David [Parsons]. We need to have those in order to keep in touch and in order to travel. For Nunavut, we can travel. But we can't travel outside of Nunavut, even to the churches...

Sometimes it's mentioned that we have way too many bishops. But a lot of us are so far away, we can't even see each other unless we have a meeting somewhere sometime, like for executive once a year. That was before; it doesn't happen anymore because we're all in different locations. Our boss is in Yellowknife ... [Bishop] Joey [Royal] is in Iqaluit ... [Bishop] Annie [Ittoshat] is down in Quebec, and I'm way down here pretty close to Churchill. The only connection we have is the telephone or internet. We try and update each other as much as possible. ☹



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