



Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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Bishop's Lenten Pastoral Letter March 1, 2022

My dear Diocesan Family,

One of the most intimidating moments for a painter is staring at a blank canvas. Devoid of colour, line, or shape, the blank canvas represents fear and possibility for the artist. *Where do I start? What is the first colour to choose? Where will the first brush stroke be placed? Will this painting become what I intend?*

Lent can be like staring at a blank canvas and wondering what these next 40 days will look like? *Where should I start? What should I take away or add to my life? Will my faith be any different in the end?*

For many, the first mark on the canvas of our lives is the smudge of black ash on our foreheads. Ash Wednesday reminds us that despite how we behave sometimes, our life on earth is finite – we have a beginning and an ending, both of which are in God's hands. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We come from God, and we return to God.

It's the '*in-between*' time of birth and death that we can be creative and intentional in our relationship with God and with one another. Lent allows a particular time to let God colour our lives with love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace. In doing so, our lives can become beautiful displays of God's artistry.

They say that a piece of artwork is subjective. Different people can respond to a work of art in different ways. A painting might be beautiful to one person and offensive to another, but the actual image remains unchanged. Lent is our opportunity to make changes in areas of our lives that need attention. Yes, there are parts of our lives that are beautiful and attractive, but what are the other areas which can cause hurt and offence to another? Where in our lives needs a little more colour to highlight God's love and grace?

Take some time to enjoy God's artwork Creation. Spend time in awe of the beauty of a sunrise or sunset. Instead of cursing a snowstorm, see it as an opportunity to be inside spending time with loved ones or a good book. Journey around your neighbourhood and notice things and people you hadn't before. Like an artist stepping back to admire their creation, take time to see where God's handiwork is revealed right in front of you.

A painting can also inspire others to see things differently, including ourselves and others. Art gives meaning and helps us understand our world. It allows us to have a deeper understanding of who we are; it increases our self-awareness and enables us to be open to new ideas and experiences.

So too does our relationship with God. Lent reminds us that we are made in God's image. *Can we recognize the image of God within us? Do others see God in us? When we look at ourselves made in God's image, do we see the human potential for good? Where is the image of God not so clear and radiant? What needs more colour on the canvas of our lives?*

This Lent, don't be intimidated by your blank canvas. *Make a mark!* Lent is a time to be honest with ourselves and with God about who we are, what we've done and what we have failed to do, and what we plan to do about it. Let our lives be the canvas placed in the hands of the Master Artist. Let God create in you a colourful heart filled with love and grace for others.

I leave you with words from a beautiful song by retired Bishop Gordon Light called *My Love Colours Outside the Lines*. You can listen to it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/YtmMb5ByX4Y>

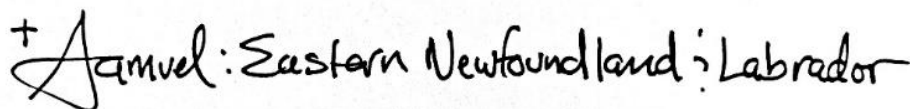
**My love colours outside the lines,
Exploring paths that few could ever find;
And takes me into places where I've never been before,
And opens doors to worlds outside the lines.**

**My Lord colours outside the lines,
Turns wounds to blessings, water into wine;
And takes me into places where I've never been before
And opens doors to worlds outside the lines.**

**My soul longs to colour outside the lines,
Tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;
I want to walk beyond the boundaries where I've never been before,
Throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.**

*My Love Colours Outside the Lines - Gordon Light
Words and Music - © Common Cup Company.*

Wishing you a 'colourful' Lent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel: Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Revd. Samuel V. Rose (He/Him)
Bishop
Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador