



February 15, 2024

Dear Fr. Robert Poole and faithful of St. Philip Parish,

I wish to reach out to you all on this first Sunday of Lent as you gather in your new temporary worship space as a consequence to the fire that took place Wednesday night. I was truly troubled when I first got the message, around 10 PM, that your church was on fire. My immediate consternation was about the safety of your pastor and you, his parishioners. By 11 PM, I was made aware that no one was hurt, that the fire was contained, and somewhat limited to the steeple. That is when I expressed a sigh of relief.

Obviously, such a serious incident bears short-term and long-term consequences. For the time being, assessments are being done by the Insurance company and more information will be forthcoming. Your pastor has assured me that the parish hall can meet your needs as a temporary worship space. I want to express my gratitude to all the volunteers that helped to make this possible. I'm also grateful for your flexibility and patience as you adjust to this new reality. I can easily understand that this is not what you are accustomed to and that you all look forward to getting back into your church. We can all appreciate that you still have your hall and church and that they did not go up in flames.

In times of challenges, we believe God is with us and strengthens us. I pray this Lenten season will be such a time of growth, trusting in Christ as he leads the way. We are reminded that the blessings of Easter morning came only after the trial and passion of the cross. May God grant you all his grace as you journey together in faith and charity.

Blessings to you all and be assured of my ongoing prayers and support.

+Marcel Damphousse
Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall