

The Right Reverend Riscylla Shaw
Area Bishop of Trent-Durham
Bishop Suffragan of Toronto



The Incorporated Synod
of the Diocese of Toronto
www.toronto.anglican.ca
Trent-Durham Area Office
965 Dundas Street West
Suite 207
Whitby, ON L1P 1G8
Telephone: 905-668-1558
Bishop cell: 416-938-8777
rshaw@toronto.anglican.ca

Thanksgiving, 2020 ~ To the Clergy & People of Trent-Durham Area

Grace and peace to you, sisters, brothers, siblings in Christ! I thank God for you, as fellow Jesus-followers, accompanying me on my path of life.

“At this time of gathering in, we enjoy the fruitfulness of our gardens, and we pause to appreciate the harmony and interconnectedness of the whole garden of our life, which is part of the garden of the universe, the Creator's garden.” *

* Gardening the Soul: A spiritual daybook through the seasons by Sister Stanislaus Kennedy.

We have received a precious reminder that we dwell in our Creator's garden, a place of spiritual refreshment and eternal life, offered to each and all of us.

Since I have recently been on a journey of vocational discernment, invited to and responding to the call to see if I was to move to a different Diocese, I have spent much time in reflection these past months. What has been revealed is that I am called to be here, in this place. As a result, I find myself in a space of grace, where I can say with deep gratitude that it was both an honour and a privilege to seriously consider going, and it is an honour, a privilege and a generous gift to be staying. At the end of the day, “it is well with my soul.” Thank you so very much for your prayers for me and my family in this time, and I ask you to continue to pray faithfully for our health and well-being; it is a rich blessing to know the power of such prayers as we journey onwards.

A blessed Thanksgiving to you ~ in this strange way of being, during a global pandemic. Be certain of my prayers for you, as you find creative ways to communicate, celebrate and ruminate on this traditional time of harvest plenty, abundance and feasting.

With your spare time, I invite you to consider in fresh ways, a 'gathering in' of our identities ~ it is a time to deliberate what perishes not. Who is Christ to you? Who are we in our faith? What does hope look like? What does it mean to be a Christ-proclaimer in this day and age, when we are living in a global village, living amongst a variety of cultures and religions (not so different from New Testament times), and yet – for our health and the safety of others, we are so separated from our communities of care and concern?

Is it possible to separate our faith from our world-views? How does our faith inform every angle of every decision we make and refuse to make, every thought and prayer and question we ask and refuse to ask, every task we undertake and refuse to undertake? How do we make in our hearts for our siblings who suffer, who are sick, who continue to live under oppression ~ how do we make room in our churches & Christian communities for the widow and the orphan, the hungry and the poor?

Jesus teaches some hard lessons about who our neighbours are, and how loving them might look in the Reign of God. From the perspective of our ancestors in faith, it seems we are to do what it takes to gather and worship together (in this day, it is often a virtual gathering, which is an amazing gift of technology) ~ for it is in community that we see the face of God. We are to do with our money what it takes to make the world a more hospitable place for those children of God who have not ~ for we cannot take our money with us when we go, and we cannot serve two masters. We are invited to open our hearts to God and therefore to each-other to the extent that we cross all boundaries of self and other to recognize God in all of us – identifying each and all of us as creatures in the Creator's garden.

Be well ~ be in touch ~ be assured that I am holding you in prayer with great thanksgiving,

Bishop Riscylla