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Bishop Riscylla's Letter to Vestry 2021

February 1, 2021 ~ St Brigid of Kildare

Dearly Beloved Friends in Christ ~ grace to you and peace on this important day as you gather in the name of Jesus.

In this Covid-19 global Pandemic, we are experiencing Virtual Vestry. This is tremendously courageous, a very different experience, and sure to have some flaws ~ we certainly would prefer to gather face to face. However, be assured of my heartfelt prayers as you gather ~ you will pull through this in good and faithful ways that bear witness to our enduring commitment to building up the Reign of God, even while 'out of our comfort zones.'

I am deeply grateful for the vision and ministry of Bishop Peter Fenty, who retired as Bishop of York Simcoe at the end of 2020. One of his legacies will be the prayer refrain, assuring us of our preciousness in the sight of 'our Loving, Liberating and Life-giving God.' He inspired many with his wit, his wisdom, and his infectious readiness to freely serve our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Please know of my deep gratitude also, for your vision and work in fulfilling the mission of Christ in your life together, in your communities and in your neighbourhoods. To the many people who serve as leadership in our parishes and on Diocesan boards and ~ Wardens, Treasurers, Administrators, Musicians, Volunteers ~ you keep us going. Thank You!

This is a time like no other, when it is vital to humbly reach out to our neighbours, to find new ways to serve, that the lonely and the lost might find hope. The posture of humility is both a gift and a discomfort for many of us, as it deepens our humanity and helps us to know ourselves as a sacred part of Creation. Building partnerships, thinking expansively and shining our lights by sharing our testimonies of faith will be a recipe for resilience.

Another fundamental ingredient in our recipe for resilience is kindness. Be good to one another, give your clergy a break (even if you are right). They are working overtime to blend traditional and innovative ways of doing ministry to meet pastoral and administrative needs, with a heart for Jesus and a heart for you. Thanks be to God!

Our priorities for 2021 are Ministry Development and Parish Partnerships /Regionalization innovations.

There is a continued emphasis on the work of Reconciliation, Recovery & Mental Health, and Radical Inclusion that we brought forward for 2019 and 2020, so if you are engaged in actively supporting and developing any of these areas as a congregation or small group, do continue in this direction.

Coming through Covid-19, however, everything is different.

The changes are in our homes, our neighbourhoods and our church communities. Loved ones have perished unaccompanied, celebrations of life and of passage (weddings, baptisms) have been delayed or cancelled, budgets (parish, personal) from last year were met, exceeded, or some were sorely under-met ... there are many ways that we can evaluate the changes that are present as part of our new reality. Embracing humility, recognizing that we are stronger together, and looking with hope and courage to the outcomes possible when we work collaboratively as church, we can create opportunities to share wisdom, learnings, staff, administration, and ministry ~ even space and resources.

We humans have the capacity to understand our discipleship to include ***responding*** to this time of radical change with faith-filled honesty and respect, recognizing that 'who we were' is not 'who we are.'

Lament is vital in healing ~ so as we move forward together, it is essential that we create the space to grieve what has been lost and destroyed ~ let us bless this loss, and give it to God.

We also need to create the space for new life to emerge and sprout up, that the Spirit of Life will prevail, that the mission of our ancestors in faith continues as we grow individually and as a community in discipleship and servanthood, and as we invite seekers to find new life in Christ.

In the spirit of new life, I strongly encourage you to pass the Social Justice and Advocacy Vestry Motion, Committing Ourselves to the work and education of Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias training and implementation in each of our communities of faith.

Be courageous: Take whatever vaccine is offered to you.

Be intentional: Build out into your community, including the 'other', with Jesus as your guide.

Be inclusive: consider the climate, the creatures, the future generations.

May God bless you and equip you richly with grace in 2021.

Yours faithfully,



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to embody, in word & action, God's grace, reconciling love, justice, compassion & liberation