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| |  | | --- | | **A Pastoral Letter from**  **The Rt. Rev. Audrey C. Scanlan**  **XI Bishop**  **The Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania**    (to be read in all parishes on Sunday, September 8, 2019)  *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*  Romans 12: 2  Dear members of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania,  Grace and Peace in the name of Jesus.  I write to you at the end of a beautiful summer-  for me, a time of rest and renewal, celebration, and deep discernment and prayer. My vacation took me from shore to shore: to California where Glenn and I hiked in the mountains, walked on the beach and, then, as the week wore on, stepped into the role of grandparents, meeting Everett William Evanson, and marveling, again, at the wonder of new life and the power of tiny lungs! In August we traveled to Maine for more hiking- on Monhegan Island- and then, at the end of vacation, I took a solo camping trip/retreat which both quieted my heart and enlivened my spirit. It was a fine holiday spent in the glory of God’s creation, among family and friends, and I am grateful for every moment.   And- I am glad to be home, now, in Central Pennsylvania.  At our Convention in October (18-19, Harrisburg) we will launch a discernment initiative for our diocese called “Shaped by Faith.”    Shaped by Faith is the outcome of my first three years among you listening and learning and coming to understand God’s mission for us in our context of Central Pennsylvania. I have seen the great gifts that we have- caring for God’s people, and living faithfully as followers of Christ, and, I have also become acquainted with the needs that we have- for the deepening of our own discipleship, securing our future and advancing the Kingdom of God.  I am convinced that God is calling us to this time of discernment to discover how to re-imagine the Church in Central Pennsylvania as the vehicle for God’s mission and sharing Jesus’ Way of Love. We are being called to discern the will of God for us- and to respond, accordingly. We are embarking on a process that will require creativity and courage so, at the end, we will be right-shaped: Shaped by Faith. There are three different ways that parishes and individuals can participate in Shaped by Faith:  ·      In one of seven Intensive Projects studying the gifts and needs of the Church and designing the optimal configuration in our regions for serving God’s mission  ·      By participating as a parish, vestry, small group, or individual in special Shaped by Faith coursework in our Stevenson School for Ministry using a voucher system for free tuition  ·      At periodic diocesan gatherings held throughout the next two years to celebrate our history as we look to the future  You will learn more about each of these three areas of Shaped by Faith and the opportunities that they will provide for your personal, spiritual growth and congregational life and mission as the project unfolds.  The Epistle to the Romans (a verse excerpted at the top of this letter) is perhaps, St. Paul’s most mature theological work. Written somewhere in the mid 50s- a half-century after Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and ascension- Paul struggles to create a unified Christian body, dedicated to the Gospel of love and focused on the reconciliation of the world in peace. The details of his letter discuss themes of justification, grace and law in an effort to join Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians together, in the same mission. Paul writes about the meaning of God’s righteousness, the **“creative goodness of the living God in action.”** (TW Manson)  My prayer for our diocese in the next two years is that we will seek the creative goodness of the living God in action and that, as Paul prayed for his people, that we will be open to transformation; transformation of our minds as we discover God’s will for us in Central Pennsylvania, and transformation of our diocese as we are Shaped by Faith.  I look forward to this faithful work together.  In the Way of Love, | |

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