

*Jim Kingstone – Thanksgiving Chapel Service, 2007*

Good morning and welcome to our Thanksgiving Chapel service.

I want to take a moment to speak to our new students, since you have come to Shawnigan, given yourselves tirelessly to adjusting and fitting in and learning how to love this great good place and are now preparing to leave for your first break. Please travel and return safely. Now that you have made this your new home, come back to us after the break. You may wish to stay home. Don't.

At the risk of invoking some cliches this morning, I wish to offer thanks for the things that have meaning and purpose to a learning community. Some of these are my own personal thanks.

I am thankful for opportunities for hard work, the kind of hard work that is good and purposeful and from which we derive a better and clearer sense of ourselves as capable of rising to challenges, meeting and surmounting obstacles with confidence, overcoming resistance and reaching new and exciting plateaus of understanding.

I am thankful for good books and the chance to read them and the opportunity my department colleagues afford me to talk about them, because great literature reveals in all its complexity our humanity.

I am thankful for the cross-country team and our new coach Ms Wiley, because we can laugh and run hard and have fun.

I am thankful for students, especially new students whose newness, expressed in wonder and perplexity and great courage and energy compel me to pay attention, even to pay attention, and I confess that sometimes I hate this, to the details. A friend of mine always said that the problem with details is there are just so many of them and that once you begin to notice them they can easily overwhelm.

I am thankful for my colleagues whose professional grace and generosity are a source of inspiration to me, and help to ensure that my own devotions to Shawnigan are worth the effort I invest—for you see you leave, but they stay or mostly stay, and at the end of the day and in quiet moments of questioning or self-doubt or in frantic ones when the work threatens to be very hard, even impossibly so, it is the adults in my life from whom I gain a robust and enduring sense of purpose, pleasure and fulfillment.

I am thankful for good food and food that is good for you, especially gummy bears and gummy worms and food like it that is fun to eat. You think you're eating a tiny piece of rubber but it's so satisfying it's a marvel to me.

I am thankful to parents, especially your parents because if they did not entrust you to us then there would be no need for teachers and no Shawnigan, because rather than be a place designed to provide employment to adults the School is one created to serve you, the students. And so I am thankful for the sacrifices your parents have made, because let's face it: the vast majority of your parents would prefer to have you at home with them—at least in a perfect world—instead of here with us. We get the challenge and pleasure of your company at a time in your lives when your true chance for growth and fulfillment is emerging—your parents get that chance only at a distance. So I would ask you to find a way to thank them for this opportunity; despite the times that are tough or perhaps because of them find a way to say thanks, to express to them your anxious desire to fulfill their faith in you.

I am thankful for holidays and vacations, for interruptions to work and the routine challenges and demands of study and learning that provide a chance to relax and be renewed by time away from hard and exhausting effort—for the opportunity recreation offers for play, for reuniting with friends and families, for variety and different kind of excitement.

I am thankful for the generous spirit that has permeated our lives in recent weeks; that the reservoir of giving to worthy causes is so wide and deep here at Shawnigan. To give with an authentic sense of pleasure, with real satisfaction, is indeed a gesture that originates in the heart and is thus a great gift in itself.

I am thankful for my own family whose enduring encouragement and laughter and love continue to provide a home, a place of safety and inspiration, a reward at the end of each day.

Finally, I am thankful for what I discern in your faces, which is a strong desire for me to stop talking, which in following the Anglican tradition of five minute homilies, I will do now, and close by simply wishing you all a safe and refreshing and Happy Thanksgiving.