



From the desk of Pastor Rachel

Greetings to you from your new pastor!

Today I am celebrating my nineteenth day as a gratified resident of Richland Center. The hospitality I have received thus far has been both humbling and impressive. With the possible exception of the need for more rain, it's truly hard for me to imagine how my first days here could have been any better.

As we are waiting for Peace's parsonage to become available later this summer, I've been provided with a charming Air BnB cottage on the quiet end of Central Avenue. The owners of the house clearly know what they're doing -- I have everything I could possibly need, and more and I am feeling quite pampered.

What's more, I have been shown remarkable kindness and encouragement by the members of both the Trinity and Peace congregations. Staff and volunteers alike have gone out of their way to bring me on board and make me feel at home, which made my first Sundays in the pulpit both comfortable and meaningful. Add to that the pleasure of fellowship and being invited to lunch after the service at Peace -- a regular feature of Sunday mornings here.

I am pleased to say that of all of the places I have been appointed in my twenty years serving the United Methodist Church (Richland Center is number seven) this ranks among the most gracious welcomes I have ever received. Which is especially remarkable considering how many significant and challenging changes are taking place within the United Methodist denomination generally, and within the Richland Center churches in particular.

I will confess that I wasn't entirely sure what to expect upon my arrival, and would have understood completely -- in fact I was prepared for the people Peace and Trinity to be a bit tentative about welcoming a stranger. Not to mention all the work that goes into bringing a new pastor into the community. All of which make the greeting and support I have received in these first few days nothing short of inspiring. It tells me a great deal about the depth of faith, commitment, and resilience that is at the heart of the United Methodist Churches in this lovely little gem of a city that is becoming my home.

I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has opened their heart and given their time and attention to making my transition such a positive one. There is still so much I have to discover about Richland Center, and about what the future holds. Not just for me, but for the faithful people of Peace and Trinity, who have chosen to weather the current uncertainties and stay the course. But, the voice of the Spirit reassures me that I am here for a reason, that God is with us, and that together we are going to be witnesses to something wonderful in the days and weeks to come.

With gratitude and blessings,

*Pastor Rachel*