



From the desk of Pastor Rachel

Dear Trinity Members and Friends,

As United Methodists, we have a long history of responding to life's challenges with courage, faith, inspired action, and an ability to work together as a community. This is the legacy that we hold as we face the changes that are taking place in our time and place. This includes the possibility that Trinity and Peace could come together as one congregation to combine our strengths and help each other face an uncertain future.

On June 27, 2023, a joint meeting, convened by the District Superintendent, brought leaders and members of both Trinity and Peace UMCs together. During that meeting, it was proposed that Peace and Trinity, two distinct, historic congregations in Richland Center, be unified to create a new "shared regional ministry." This would result in creating a single congregation, housed in what is now the Trinity UMC building.

In our current circumstances there are compelling reasons for this proposal:

- Both Trinity and Peace are facing the financial realities of declining income in a time of increasing expenses.
- Our memberships have been aging and declining steadily for some time now. With the combined effects of Covid and disaffiliation, church attendance has decreased significantly and many members have left the denomination.
- There is an undeniable need for change and renewal, and coming together provides an opportunity to respond to this need in a positive and proactive way.

Therefore, members in each congregation will vote after church on September 17, 2023 to determine if this proposed unification and creation of a new shared ministry will become a reality. To be eligible to vote you must be a professing member and be present in the pews on that day. It will take a 2/3 majority vote to join the churches together and both churches must agree for it to happen.

Prior to the September 17th vote, we will hold an open Question & Answer session at Trinity. We highly encourage everyone, regardless of membership status, to attend and share your thoughts, insights, and concerns. The day and time for this will be announced soon.

If the both churches vote in favor of this proposal:

- Peace will close their building and it will be sold. Items of historical and ceremonial significance for the people of Peace may be transferred to the Trinity building.
- In accordance with the Book of Discipline (BOD), all proceeds from the sale will go to the Wisconsin Conference where they will be held in trust for missional use by the new unified congregation.

pastor.

- Trinity's parsonage, which is currently under lease until the end of the year, may be sold when the lease term expires and proceeds may also be allocated, as determined by the BOD, for the benefit of the unified congregation.

- The new unified congregation will be responsible for conference apportionments to be calculated based on the revised and audited membership rolls of the new unified congregation.

- A new name for the unified congregation may be chosen.

- There will be a number of special ceremonies and celebratory events to mark the birth of this new ministry, as well as many opportunities to celebrate, commemorate, grieve and honor the history, ministry, and individual identities of the former separate congregations.

If one or both churches vote against the proposal:

- Peace UMC will close its doors and cease to operate before the end of 2023.

- Peace UMC assets will revert to the conference, except for the parsonage which may be deeded to Trinity UMC.

- Individual Peace members may choose to attend or join Trinity, or to go elsewhere.

- Trinity will continue to operate as long as possible with the current challenges of declining membership and revenue.

These are the facts as we understand them today and we will keep you posted as more information becomes available. Our sincere hope is that the people of Trinity UMC will take this matter prayerfully to heart and make an informed choice based on their own conscience, wisdom, and clear judgment. We understand that this is a deeply personal, affecting, and difficult decision for everyone involved, and we are praying fervently, asking for God's wisdom, mercy, and guidance every day.

With our sincere gratitude and very best regards,

The Leaders of Trinity UMC