



A Holiday Message From the Pastor...

Advent has arrived! We are hanging greens, choosing carols, and checking our supply of hand-held candles. And, since this is my first holiday season in Richland Center, I am looking forward to experiencing all the beautiful and beloved traditions of this community. This is the season for sharing our warmest wishes and memories as we are each visited by our own friendly “ghosts of Christmas past.”

At the same time, in the back of our minds we also know 2023 is coming to a close. We are reminded that this special season isn’t just about reliving the past. As we look forward to the coming of the Christ child during Advent, we know that as Christians, God’s plan, though informed by the past, is always looking ahead and intended for the future. Each year, when we come again to this special season, we are reminded that we are the living link between the hard-won lessons of the past and the brightest hope for the future. Everything we do as we celebrate helps to keep the past alive so that we can pass it forward to the next generations. That is how we keep the beauty and the wisdom of our traditions vital and relevant.

We may love looking back, but Christians are ultimately a forward-facing people. As we all look ahead to this Christmas where Trinity and Peace will be remembering their pasts and rejoicing in their rich and vibrant histories as two churches, we also know that a New Year is on its way. It will be a new chapter where new blessings and new challenges await us all, as together we become the new, unified United Methodist Church in Richland Center. And while this might be an unsettling prospect, our past and our faith have shown us, time and time again, that Christ lives, and he will be with us. If we continue to show up faithfully and open our hearts to his love and his guidance, we will be back here next year telling tales of our miraculous adventures as old traditions and new joys find each other and are carried forward into God’s bright plan for ages and the people yet to come.

With all my gratitude and every warm and wonderful blessing for Advent, Christmas and the New Year.

Pastor Rachel Olson