



## *Friedens Church of Washington, UCC*

“A Country Church with a New Spirit”  
*Open Doors and Open Hearts*

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus Christ,

This Advent and Christmas, I was particularly moved by the vision and hope of Isaiah. In a world that sometimes seems like it has gone crazy, Isaiah’s words remind us of a God who redeems and delivers us, who knows us intimately and loves us passionately and tenderly, who is truly present with us—Immanuel, God-with-us. Our Lord continues to speak in our lives and our world, bringing His purpose and will to fruition. This is our God, whose being is steadfast love and mercy and whose will is justice.

Isaiah tells us, “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. <sup>3</sup>For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” (Isaiah 43:1-3b)

With the dawn of another year, let us trust in our Lord who tells us, “Do not fear, for I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:5) Do not fear.

Often, in the Bible, those words—*do not fear*—are told to us in times of uncertainty and transformation, and they are spoken in those “Advent times” of expectant hope and waiting, as our very souls long for something better. And the Lord asks us to trust—trust that God is at work in our lives and in our world.

This month, the Long Range Planning and Visioning Committee will be offering a report on the vision they have discerned for our church. I am very thankful for their work this last year and for their commitment and dedication to our Lord and to Friedens. But the work has just begun as it will take all of our help to answer God’s calling for our church. I am asking for your help, your service, and your support. Above all, I ask you to trust in God and God’s vision.

I also want to take a moment to thank Shelley Schluens for her work as Sunday School Superintendent, a service she offered with faithfulness, love, and grace. After over 14 years as Superintendent, she has decided to step down from that role. A search is currently underway for our next superintendent.

Blessings and Peace,  
Pastor Ron

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