

ARTICLE FOR COUNTRY GAZETTE

November 24, 2004

By Rev. Carol Mariano

Orting United Methodist Church

*“But the person that endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:13)*

We don't always think of longevity as something to be valued. Like they say, “Who wants to live to be ninety? Only the person who is eighty-nine.” Our youth oriented culture doesn't take time to discover the values and wisdom learned through many years of enduring all the vicissitudes of life. Instead we follow fads and fashions, not only in clothing, but also in our religious life.

Change comes at us fast and furious, sometimes bringing good things, sometimes simply leaving everything in a shambles. What parent doesn't suffer painfully when a job is lost. What child isn't torn apart by a family move. I certainly was when as an eleven year old we left the farm to move half way across the state to a new home, one that didn't seem especially friendly to me. There comes a time when it is good to stop and look at where we have come from, a time to remember why we are where we are and why we are who we are. That gives us strength to put broken lives back together and to move forward in trust. I found that strength in my family as we held onto and carried with us the traditions we had built up over time in our home and church.

Tradition! I've heard that word used disparagingly by many. Yet it is not TV sitcoms that brought us to this day. It is hundreds of Thanksgiving Days shared with families who love each other and share thoughts and feelings and stories together. People who play together and work out their differences faithfully with each other even when it is difficult. It is the ghosts of Christmases past, yes, but it is also the angels of Christmases past telling us that life is good because of the love of Jesus who “went about doing good,” who told us to love our enemies and who spoke words of peace on earth. It was Christmas projects like making paper chains out of last year's Christmas cards as we remembered the people who had sent them to us and worked those memories into a chain of relationships filling our home with love.

At Orting United Methodist Church we are build upon a long chain of relationships going back to 1877, before Orting was a town, before Washington was a state. Through good and bad times the church has held together. I'm told that the only time they didn't meet on Sunday was during the flu epidemic of World War I. I am proud to be pastor of a church like this. We have changed with the times and we will continue to change in ways that are meaningful as we respond to the Holy Spirit working among us, and as new people join our church. But we also are blessed by a wealth of traditions and stories and relationships going through time and we would love to share those with you this Christmas season. Our doors and our hearts are open to you. We invite you to become a part of our tradition.