Dear Gull Lake Families and Staff,

I have always been intrigued by science and astronomy. As a trained musician, I can confirm there is a strong correlation between the fields of music and science. Many composers have shared a similar fascination with the laws of nature and the makeup of the universe. We all share this deep curiosity and closely track the details using our state-of-the-art telescopes and distant probes that still transmit from the edges of space back to the Big Blue Marble. Many of us are familiar with Gustav Holst’s *The Planets*. Two of the more famous movements from this major orchestral work are *Jupiter* and *Mars*. These movements inspired composers such as John Williams to create scores for epic movie series. You can hear Holst’s direct influence on Williams when you listen to the soundtracks for the *Star Wars* movies. Our conceptions of the vast distances of space have been formed by these musical representations whether we know it or not. As a human race, we create symbols and representations for the complex world and universe in which we dwell.

During this Holiday Season, when the Heavens seem to draw nearer the Earth, we find ourselves back at center stage in the spotlight. Humanity is under close observation, as satellites orbit tracking weather systems or geopolitical hot spots rife with conflict. While much of life involves circumstances beyond our reach and control, we are gifted with the ability to respond through choice and free will within our sphere of influence. We can choose love and hospitality over anger and retribution, self-reflection and understanding over reckless impulsivity and judgement.

So, even though we know we are a speck in the universe, we understand the rarity of our existence and consciousness, the preciousness of this gift of life and liberty. What will we make of it? What symbols and representations will we create and communicate with each other on this journey?

Use your gifts, be the gift, this Holiday Season.

Raphael Rittenhouse/Superintendent
Gull Lake Community Schools