



Dear Friends in Christ,

Advent begins a new year in the rhythms of the Church, flowing out of the marvelous crescendo of Christ the King Sunday. A common prayer offered across the world in that week says:

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

That great vision and longing represents the broad arc of the entire Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fullness of the His Kingdom: *"...that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule..."*

The Church is the community where this gracious rule is made material, visible and audible – celebrating the personal stories of freedom from the evil divisions and degrading sins of this broken and rebellious world, and illustrating the hopefulness of our being brought together under Christ Jesus. This is where your story fits in, and each of the almost 100 congregations “brought together” within our Conference exists to demonstrate this great promise in the fellowship, ministry, and mission entrusted to them by our living Lord.

As you gather in Annual Meetings in 2018, I ask you to remember and give priority to the broader mission of the Conference and the ECC in your prayers, decisions, and financial commitments to support God’s work in the world. Our determination to sustain and advance towards our *2025 Vision* of serving this thriving and expanding movement of God calls for your increasing generosity and investment in our common mission. We ask you to grow your giving to the conference to or beyond 3.5% this year. We have increased our levels of support and service in trust and anticipation of your growing generosity, but sustaining that calls for increased percentage and dollar giving in 2018.

It is our joy and privilege to both serve and represent you in extending the mission of Jesus outward and forward. Thank you for helping us sustain the momentum of God’s transforming grace and goodness *under his most gracious rule*.

Yours because of Him,

Howard K. Burgoyne
Superintendent