



December 2019

Dear Fellow Servants of Christ,

As you gather together for your congregation's Annual Meeting, it is a privilege to greet you on behalf of the 76 churches in eight states that make up the Great Lakes Conference. I join the Apostle Paul in saying to you, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

I am grateful for the partnership we have in ministry as you (1) seek to make and deepen disciples in your own community, (2) support the Great Lakes Conference and the larger Covenant Church as we endeavor to start and strengthen churches, develop leaders and strive for mercy and Biblical justice across our land, and (3) support our collective efforts to serve God globally in the name of Jesus. Because of your faithfulness in local ministry and your contributions to the GLC and the ECC in 2019, we were (and continue to be) three strand strong!

I want you to know that because of our three-way partnership (local church, GLC, ECC) we were able to plant a thriving new church in Auburn Hills, MI and continue coaching the pastors and leaders of our four most recent GLC church plants: Kingdom Embassy Covenant Church in Muskegon, MI; New Community Covenant Church in Elkins, WV; The Movement Covenant Church in Nashville, TN; and Hope City Covenant Church in Richmond, KY. Our partnership also enabled us to continue giving financial support to previous church plants through their third year, provide much needed coaching to churches through their eighth year of ministry, and to recruit, assess and train several additional prospective church planters for future new churches.

Because of the three-way partnership, our Conference was also able to continue providing congregational vitality ministry support to several GLC churches and pastors. As those churches took steps to become healthy and missional again, our shared mission grew stronger.

Furthermore, I want you to know that because of our three-way partnership, we were able to provide leadership training for both lay persons and pastors through individual consultations and the leadership workshops we provided at the Annual Meeting in Canton. Meanwhile, your church's financial contributions enabled us to support nine GLC churches experiencing pastoral transition, and twenty GLC pastors in the credentialing process. Those behind-the-scenes services continue to be crucial for the long-term health of our churches.

Finally, our partnership enabled us to encourage and resource the outreach efforts of our churches. Our collective support for Mission Meadows and Portage Lake Bible Camp enabled them to help our churches in the making and deepening of disciples; the North American Japanese Outreach ministry impacted hundreds of Japanese nationals who live in the USA; the coaching we provided to a sister church in Germany bore more fruit in their church planting and evangelism strategies; and multiple churches utilized our Lego Ministry resources to enhance their ministry to children.

With the matching grant of \$150,000 available to our Conference to help us plant four new churches in the GLC in 2020, we have much to look forward to. As we enter the new year, may your church experience the grace of Jesus in your life together, the wisdom of God as you seek His guidance, and the power of the Spirit to fulfill your Kingdom calling. May God bless you richly as you serve together in Jesus' name.

Gratefully, and on behalf of our entire conference staff,

Garth McGrath