



The Evangelical Covenant Church

December 2020

Dear Great Lakes Conference Churches,

Grace and peace to you, and greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church denominational offices. I pray for God's greatest blessings as you gather for your church's Annual Meeting and celebrations this year. Even amidst the difficult year we have had together, there is much to celebrate in God's goodness and faithfulness.

This winter we welcomed Grace Shim, Asia Regional Coordinator of Serve Globally, to speak at our staff chapel. Grace is a trained and licensed counselor and was able to share some insights with our Covenant staff as we walk through this challenging season. Her three takeaways were: **Embrace the sorrow. Savor the good. Leverage your strengths.**

As Covenanters across the United States, Canada, and serving in our global contexts, we have all faced feelings of grief and loss in this past year. It may have been a job loss, loss of financial stability, loss of the ability to travel and visit our loved ones, or loss of good health. We are reminded, daily, that we are in this together. We choose to walk alongside one another through times of grief and cast all our cares on our God who cares for each one of us.

While it's easy to see the challenges in this year, God invites us to turn and notice what the Holy Spirit is doing to further God's kingdom. **This past year we have much to be thankful for when we look at what God has done through the Covenant.** Local churches have participated in ministry-building and life-changing Covenant opportunities, such as the 30-day pivot, online gatherings for youth, pastoral cohorts to work toward racial righteousness, and webinars on peacemaking led by Covenant global partners from South Sudan and Israel/Palestine. I give thanks to God for our partnership together in the whole Gospel.

Heading into 2021, we look to build our resiliency and leverage our strengths - as individual churches and together as a denomination. Each of our 890 Covenant churches is uniquely positioned in its community to share the hope and love of Jesus in meaningful ways. I encourage you to lean into your strengths in the coming year and go boldly into the places where the Holy Spirit is leading you. We do this together as the Covenant denomination by continuing to Start and Strengthen Churches, Develop Leaders, Make and Deepen Disciples, Love Mercy Do Justice, and Serve Globally.

Most importantly, we know that our greatest strength comes when we take the time to sit with our Savior and remember who we are and whose we are.

Be encouraged that after a year of challenges, God's love still pursues us faithfully and the Holy Spirit continues to find new ways to inspire us to go deeper in Christ and further in mission, together.

"Love the Lord, all his faithful people! Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord." (Psalm 31:23a-24)

In Christ's love,

John S. Wenrich
President – Evangelical Covenant Church