



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As you gather in 2010 for your congregational meetings I write to express greetings and gratitude for your continuing partnership in the ministry of the Gospel through the work of the Conference. We will gather to celebrate 120 years of ministry as a servant to and extension of our churches on May 1, 2010. We hope a large delegation from your congregation will plan to come and participate in the fellowship, worship and celebration of our shared ministry.

As you look back on 2009 in terms of the highs and lows of ministry many will comment on the difficulties created by the economic collapse and uncertainties the world has suffered. This has hit home in specific challenges with lost jobs, homes, investments, and confidence in our economic prowess. The motto engraved on our coinage, "In God We Trust" takes on a new poignancy during these trials. I deeply appreciate the level of commitment and in some cases, real sacrifice that is expressed in your continued support. We find ourselves longing for the promise of the Psalmist of Israel who in confidence prayed, *"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."* (Psalm 126:5-6). While we would prefer to always be in the season of reaping, somehow it seems that God accomplishes much when we are in the season of weeping! Faith is strengthened, hope is clarified, and love is made manifest in the way we live during trying circumstances. As Christians we do not require optimal conditions in order to walk with Jesus; he comes to us and stays with us in spite of wind, waves, and fear of darkness.

As we face 2010 I continue to sense the strong forward movement of Christ among us. Our theme this year is **"Under Full Sail: Navigate. Adapt. Thrive."** Expert mariners know how to leverage the winds of adversity towards their advantage in how they tack into an opposing wind. We must learn to do the same by faith in Jesus our Master. The survival of the church is not our responsibility; the joyful (and tearful) obedience that springs from faith is our mandate. He who walked on the waters stands in our midst focused still on transforming the lives of hurting and lost people. The storms that rise to harm us He uses to refine us and steer us to new places and peoples we are called to bring to Him (Mark 6:45ff).

To enable us to fully underwrite our mission I ask each church to raise their level of financial partnership in the conference to benchmark 5% of all contributions by 2012. This "3-2-5" challenge – 3 years to give 5% - begins now as you covenant together to undergird our church's mission this year. As we turn into the wind together we advance the health and strength of the whole Church as we continue to plant and cultivate thriving congregations, ministries, leaders and followers for Jesus.

Yours because of Him,

Howard K. Burgoyne
Superintendent