



December 2023

... I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.
Matthew 16:18

Dear friends,

Those who encountered Jesus in the first century were often filled with joy. Joy is the deep abiding confidence in knowing that God loves us, is for us, and is active in redeeming and renewing all things. There remains much pain and brokenness in our sin-damaged world. Still, while many voices forecast the church's decline, Jesus's promise from Matthew 16 remains – *I will build my church*.

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with joy because I continue to see Jesus building His church ...
... in rural congregations that have continued to grow and welcome new people into the family of God, even in the absence of pastoral leadership. *I will build my church*.
... in a young fellowship in Colorado which refocused their ministry to serve hundreds of new immigrants with food, fellowship, and a community of faith. *I will build my church*.
... in historic churches across our geography, like a Kansas church celebrating 150 years of ministry while experiencing a vibrant, fresh work of God in their midst. *I will build my church*.
... in brand new churches that are connecting unreached populations and new generations to the love and truth of Jesus. *I will build my church*.

It is true that we live in challenging times. There are many headwinds that our churches are navigating. Fear continues to stir anxiety, as well as fuel division, war, and oppression. But Jesus's promise gives us a foundation for joy – *I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*.

As your congregation gathers for your Annual Meeting, let us rejoice in the Lord who is active among us. Thank you for proclaiming the gospel and embodying the presence of Jesus in your community. Our Midwest Conference team is excited to journey with you in the coming year as we pray, encourage, equip, support, and discern together. We also look forward to seeing you April 26-27 at LifeSpring Covenant in Loveland, Colorado, for our Annual Ministry Celebration!

With a joyful heart,

Brian Johnson
Superintendent