



The Evangelical Covenant Church

April 2021

TO: Celebration 2021 of the Midwest Conference
Tammy Swanson-Draheim, Superintendent
Travis Nordstrom, Conference Chair

Greetings on behalf of the Evangelical Covenant Church!

It was a year ago in mid-March that pandemic shutdowns began. None of us will soon forget how difficult the past year was, and everything we had to navigate, fight for, and endure. I am convinced, however, that the church was built for times like this. The Gospel, communicated through the local church, is the hope of the world.

In spite of the challenges and losses we experienced in the past year and all that we continue to face, as followers of Jesus, we can say with truth and confidence: God is faithful. Because God is faithful, we continue to proclaim and demonstrate the whole Gospel.

Our mission is to join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world. Our mission priorities remain constant: to start and strengthen churches, make and deepen disciples, develop leaders, love mercy and do justice, and serve globally.

Together we are a multiethnic mosaic of mission friends committed to the whole mission of the church. As a multiethnic denomination, we seek to live into the beloved community that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described. Therefore, we are developing a "Becoming the Beloved Community" resource suite that will help our Covenant family continue to become an authentic reflection of the kingdom of God—here on earth—as depicted in Revelation 7:9: *"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."*

In addition to your conference annual meeting, I invite you to join delegates from hundreds of other Covenant churches June 22-26 for Gather 2021, which will include the 135th Annual Meeting. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, our Covenant family will be connecting virtually. Information can be found at gather.covchurch.org.

In this season of uncertainty and ambiguity, I am reminded of TW Anderson, the only lay person to serve as president of the Covenant from 1933 to 1959. Elected during the height of the Depression, he guided the church through a time of challenge, conflict, and developing identity.

He contributed to a book entitled *Covenant Memories, Golden Jubilee*. It was written in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Covenant, from 1885 to 1935. President Anderson writes: *"Living movements are not static but adapt themselves to new conditions. But basic principles remain the same."*

The mission and the mission priorities remain the same, but the methods change as we adapt to new conditions. It's part of our Covenant DNA.

I am grateful to be serve alongside you. Your partnership in the Gospel will help us emerge from this crisis, not just three strands strong, but three strands *stronger*. We are in it together, going deeper in Christ and further in mission.

I pray that this promise from God will encourage you and our entire Covenant family:

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” —Isaiah 43:19

In Christ’s love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John S. Wenrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

John S. Wenrich
President