Church of the Brethren

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Pacific Southwest District:

As you prepare for and participate in District Conference this year, I hope you will think of it as both a joyous gift as well as a solemn responsibility. I consider it a gift and a responsibility because it provides us the opportunity to celebrate Christian community beyond our home congregation and it encourages us to nurture and challenge one another on our faith journeys as we strive to better understand who God is calling us to be. District Conference enables us to laugh together, to pray together, to think well together, to see the divine in one another, and to gather together before God to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit. I'm delighted that you are investing your time, energy and gifts in District Conference this year and on behalf of the Annual Conference officers it is a pleasure to thank you for that commitment. I hope it will be an inspiring and rejuvenating experience for you.

In a similar way I look forward with hope and anticipation to gathering together in Cincinnati next summer for our 236th recorded Annual Conference. We will have important work to do as we carefully and prayerfully deliberate together. Annual Conference will also provide time for listening, learning, and discernment. We will be blessed through challenging and meaningful worship services. We will be intentional about preserving time for good conversation, soul-soothing music, and biblical inspiration.

Wilbur Hoover, a former pastor and mentor of mine, once defined the church as "people grouped together so they can live out their faith better than they could alone." I think Wilbur was right. We belong together. We need each other. We need each and every one of us if we are to fulfill the new commandment Jesus gave us: that we love one another (John 13:34). When we meet for worship on Sunday mornings in our home congregation, when we gather for District Conference, and when we assemble as the Body of Christ at Annual Conference we contribute to and benefit from being the church.

Let's be the church as we gather together in Cincinnati on July 4-8, 2023. Let's listen anew to Jesus's call to inclusive love and costly discipleship. Let's unite at Annual Conference in God's presence so we can live out our faith more fully than any of us could alone.

It will be a pleasure to greet you then and there!

Tim McElwee
2023 Annual Conference Moderator

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together

1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120 847-742-5100 800-323-8039 Fax: 847-742-6103