



Greetings to the 166th Christian Church in Georgia Regional Assembly,

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. It is indeed an amazing blessing to be at our 166th Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia. Our prayer is that our gathering declares that 166 years of rich and sacred ministry is a sign that God is still invested in our community of faith. We are 63 faithful congregations, and we are moving forward to claim God's power, love, and revelation that will empower our witness as a beloved community of faithful servants.

The theme of our assembly this year is "Becoming God's Beloved Community." We are on a journey together to witness to the world that the love of Christ transforms our circle of exclusion to a broader circle of inclusion.

*As we gather for this assembly, each of us brings both gifts and brokenness to the Table of our Lord. **At this Table, our differences are many – they rest on theology, church size, congregational demographics, geography, economics, gender and gender identity, race, generation, nationality, and disability.** None of these differences are greater than the cross or more powerful than God's love to shape us into a beloved community of God's faithful servants.*

*This community is built on unity within congregational freedom. **Our freedom makes room for different practices in the expressions of our local church and witness.** While making our own choices, we also share the love of Christ in covenant with one another. Together we carry out the great commission of Christ to "go and make disciples."*

***Our hope is that as we engage in conversation, we all stay at the table and celebrate the rich heritage that is ours.** As the Christian Church in Georgia – God's beloved community – we acknowledge and celebrate that heritage. In 1947 Edward Moseley authored a paper, "History of Disciples of Christ in Georgia," in which he wrote:*

"This religious heritage has many inspiring things about it. Certainly Georgia Disciples may well lift up their heads and rejoice in a noble heritage. Let it be carefully preserved and used as a sacred trust. The past and the present are inseparably linked together. The past can instruct, but never let it fetter the creative, living present. For this generation is making its contribution to the glorious heritage that is even now being transmitted for those who shall come into this spiritual relationship during years ahead."

*As Christians of this generation, we have been given this sacred trust to live the story of the Christ, the cross, and the creation of God's beloved community. **For it is God's love that forms and fashions us into the likeness of Christ, not because we deserve it or earn it, but because of God's grace. God's grace compels us to seek new practices of grace and love, reaching out across differences to become God's beloved community.***

Thank you for entering into the journey of "Becoming God's Beloved Community." May this assembly bless you with rich insights into God's wide open and inclusive love.

*Rev. Denise Bell, Regional Minister
and the Regional Elders of the Christian Church in Georgia*