

Friends,

It's good to be back in the Alabama-West Florida Conference after traveling last week! Our first Council of Bishops meeting of the new quadrennium was held at beautiful St. Simons Island where we spent time in covenant with one another.

Many of you are anxious to hear more about the special called General Conference session. It will be held in February or March of 2019 at a location to be determined by the planning committee. We should know a specific date and location for this called session by the end of the year. Some of you had hoped that this meeting could happen sooner. Due to a requirement that materials be in the hands of delegates at least 230 days before such a session, the committee felt it was best to convene in 2019. Our delegates from 2016 will be our Alabama-West Florida Conference representatives again in 2019.

The second phase of the "Praying Our Way forward" initiative was recently announced at our extended cabinet quadrennial training. This prayer movement serves as a response to the Council of Bishops initiative. Together, let's be in prayer for the church, where we are all praying for God's leadership to guide us effectively in fulfilling the mission of the church. We invite you – clergy, laity, congregations, and small groups across the conference to pray for God's guidance as we move towards this special called session. Our conference will be given a designated week to be in prayer.

In the meantime, we have a lot of fruitful work we can do in our own conference. I'm hearing outstanding reports from our district superintendents about their charge conference meetings. While these necessary meetings can feel obligatory in nature, we're learning about so many unique ways our local churches are reaching people for Christ. This is what our mission is all about! I am deeply grateful for how you continue to live out the great commission.

I have just completed two more On-boarding Sessions with clergy and am so thankful for this opportunity. Others may be planned in the coming months. All clergy and laity will have the opportunity to spend time with me at our upcoming Town Hall meetings in each district starting in January. Our Lay Leader, Beverly Maddox, and I will share in these eight gatherings together. There will be time allotted to meet with laity and clergy following these Town Hall meetings. This will be important time together and I look forward to meeting with many of you and hearing your hopes and dreams for your churches. I encourage you to respond to your District Superintendents when invitations are extended. Our time together is so important as we work cohesively to make disciples for the transformation of each local church in the AWF Conference. Be sure to check our Website in the coming weeks for more information.

In this season of thanksgiving, my prayer for each of you is to deeply know God and hear his call upon your life. I am so appreciative of how dedicated you are to your ministry and give thanks to God for his many blessings on the Alabama-West Florida Conference.