



March 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we get into the swing of 2017 at GCI, I look forward with growing anticipation to what I know will be a highlight of the year for me: our All-Denomination conference. Last year, I shared with you how GCI leadership was in the planning stages of our conference, and how much I looked forward to it. Time has flown, and I couldn't be happier to announce that registration has opened (registration info included at the end of the letter). I hope to see each of you at this meaningful gathering of believers from across the country and around the world. As we move closer to this wonderful event, I wanted to let you know some of the specifics of the conference, and what makes this year's gathering so special.

Every year, GCI holds regional conferences across a variety of locations. These are opportunities to foster connection and to provide targeted support for particular communities. But every three years we bring our worldwide denomination together in one place. Our 2017 Denominational Conference will be one of these special years. This all-church gathering in Orlando, Florida is shaping up to be our best yet. Our Conference theme this year is "We Are GCI!" and it couldn't be more appropriate.



One of the best things about our conferences is that they offer attendees from around the world a chance to connect and share what's been happening in their local ministries. Regional pastors and mission developers will share about what they see God doing in their congregations, communities, countries and continents. With this year's theme, we want to focus on both the unity of GCI as a global denomination as well as celebrate our many distinct regional identities.

This conference will feature stories from ministries around the world. Leaders from a variety of locations and situations will have a chance to update the larger community. I know all of us will come away from this year's gathering with a clearer sense of who *we* truly are, in keeping our theme "We are GCI!"

These conferences are always rich and rewarding. They have the warmth and celebratory feel of a family reunion. I'm looking forward to the Orlando conference because I know I'll come face-to-face with brothers and sisters I don't ordinarily see. Our name really does say it all – we are a *communion*, brought together by God's *grace*. And we truly are an *international* denomination, which means that our many members around the world rarely get a chance to gather in one place. This Denominational Conference will offer a unique opportunity to commune together.

I'm looking forward to this year's conference especially, because I know it will be a powerful reminder of how diverse a community we are at GCI. This conference is not meant to be exclusively for ordained ministers – instead, all are warmly invited. I want each person in our denomination to feel encouraged to attend, and to know there will be something for everyone at this gathering. We'll worship together, share our vision for the future, and learn together about our many churches world over.

Our last Denominational Conference had over a thousand attendees, and we expect this year's turnout to be even better! The conference is scheduled for August 2nd through the 6th at the Lake Buena Vista Hilton in Orlando, Florida. I know you don't want to miss the valuable training, equipping, and connecting that the conference will offer. I'm as eager for this denomination-wide gathering as I've ever been, because I know how meaningful it will be.

Our many wonderful speakers will provide regional updates from the past few years, and share their visions for the future. Greg Williams will highlight our intern program and other initiatives to develop church vision and discipleship. Gary Deddo, President of Grace Communion Seminary, will discuss the ways GCS continues to develop with a vision to equip the next generation of GCI's church leadership around the world. He'll preside over GCS's second graduation ceremony. Cathy Deddo, will speak about how we can integrate Trinitarian theology into daily life and congregational ministry. We'll also have a youth delegation joining us for the first time, including some of our graduated seminary interns. A number of workshops and seminars will be available on a wide range of topics. All this and more will help us glimpse what the future holds for GCI.

Mostly though, I'm looking forward to our Denominational Conference because at no other time do I get to see so many representatives of our vibrant denomination in one place. GCI has ministries and congregations all over the world. At last count, 13 countries will be joining us. At this year's conference, we'll hear from our delegates from all around the world, including representatives from Africa, Canada, South America, Australia, Europe, Southeast Asia, Mexico, Caribbean, Bangladesh, from our Spanish-speaking congregations, and our youth leaders. Grace Communion International is made up of people from all ages and backgrounds, connected by God's love and Christ's gospel. Nowhere do I feel this more directly than at our all-denomination fellowship.

GCI is also in a season of change. Our 2017 conference will be forward-looking, considering steps of growth as we trust God with our future. We'll also take a look back in gratitude over where God has brought us. Greg Williams, Director of Church Administration and Development, will share some of his insights about the next chapter of Grace Communion International and preparations to meet the challenges of living and sharing the gospel.

I hope my enthusiasm for this conference is infectious! If you're interested in attending, or want to know more, please call us at 1-800-574-2299, or visit our website registration link at: <https://www.gci.org/go/2017> You'll need to create a simple online account to register, but the 2017 All-Denomination Conference is truly open to all.

The theme "We are GCI!" is a celebration, but it's also a call to action. There is no community without our congregations and members. Just as we will raise our voices together in songs of praise this summer, so too, GCI is made up of many "voices" – some soft, some loud, some that lead, some that harmonize that actively serve together whether we are all together, or miles apart. But the beauty of the song is in how we all join together in song to worship the same God. I look forward to joining with you in worship and in fellowship this August at our Orlando Conference.

With joy and anticipation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Tkach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph Tkach
President — Grace Communion International