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Beloved Church,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

As we look toward the year ahead, I give thanks to God for the faithfulness, resilience, and witness of the Christian Church in Tennessee. Across our congregations and ministries, I continue to see signs of deep commitment, courageous love, and a desire to follow Christ faithfully in changing and challenging times. As we enter 2026, I am pleased to share our regional theme: Rooted & Rising.

This theme emerges from the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:6–7: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, established in the faith... overflowing with thanksgiving.” These words speak powerfully to who we are and who God is calling us to become.

To be rooted is to be grounded deeply in Christ—formed by Scripture, sustained by prayer, shaped by love, and strengthened by our shared identity as Disciples of Christ. In a world marked by uncertainty and rapid change, our roots matter. They anchor us in God’s faithfulness and nourish us with hope.

To be rising is to respond to God’s call with courage and imagination. It is to trust that the Spirit is still at work—raising up leaders, renewing congregations, and calling us outward in mission, justice, and witness. Rising does not mean abandoning what grounds us; it means growing from those roots into new life and faithful action. In 2026, Rooted & Rising invites us to hold these truths together. We are called to deepen our spiritual lives while stepping boldly into God’s future. We are called to care for one another while engaging our communities with compassion and purpose. We are called to be grounded in Christ and lifted by the Spirit.

My prayer is that this theme will shape our preaching and teaching, our leadership development, our regional gatherings, and our shared ministry across Tennessee. May it encourage us to ask faithful questions: How are we being rooted more deeply in Christ? Where is God inviting us to rise in hope, courage, and love?

Thank you for your faithfulness to Christ and to one another. I am grateful to serve alongside you, and I look forward to all that God will do among us in the year ahead.

May we be rooted in Christ and rising together into God’s mission.

With gratitude and hope,

Rev. Kevin L. McNeil

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Christian Church in Tennessee