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My Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is hard to believe that Reverend Jessica and I have come to this point in our ministry when, in a few short months, we will be retiring from active service. What is even more difficult to believe is how quickly the eight years we have spent with you in the First Episcopal District have gone by. Nonetheless, our time here has been an incredible journey. It has been our joy to come to the birthplace of African Methodism, link arms with each of you, cast our vision—which you wholeheartedly embraced—and write a new chapter in the life and legacy of this historic District under the mantra, **“Called to Make a Difference – First Things First.”**



During these eight years, we have reminded you repeatedly—individually and collectively—that you have been called to make a difference. So, the question is, what is being called by God all about?

I believe there is no human experience that strikes a deeper chord in the hearts and minds of people than discovering their life’s purpose and learning the answer to the question, **“Why Am I Here?”** The question may appear to be simplistic, but it is not, because it is my sincere belief that no person’s life can be complete or have real meaning until they discover why they are here on Earth, and the purpose they were born to fulfill. I cannot conceive of God, the omnipotent and omniscient One, creating anyone without having a reason in mind. I believe every person conceived by God is someone special, very special, who is here by design.

Beloved, you are the CROWN JEWELS of God’s creation. You are His handiwork, meticulously fashioned in His throne room and ordained by God to fulfill His divine purpose and plan for your lives.

It is our hope that this revamped Annual Conference Season will be informative, as well as inspirational, as we engage in workshops and seminars designed to enhance your spiritual growth and development, and highlight our achievements, goals and opportunities as **Difference Makers**. Reverend Jessica and I are standing on tiptoes in anticipation of a mighty move of God during this Annual Conference Season. We are believing that, when the Saints of the First come together on one accord, God will pour out His Spirit and empower us to do even greater works than we could ever ask or imagine, to expand His Kingdom and enlarge our territories. In so doing, the FIRST, indeed, will show itself to be FIRST in every way throughout all of African Methodism.

Reverend Jessica and I commend and congratulate Presiding Elder Ellis B. Loudon, Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford and the family of historic Mount Zion AME Church of Dover for hosting the 97th Session of the Delaware Annual Conference. We pray for God’s blessing upon everyone in attendance and entreat you to **Keep Making a Difference!**

Yours in His Service,

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Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram, Presiding Prelate