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Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On behalf of the ninety-nine churches and sixty one charges that make up the Florence District, I welcome you to Florence and the 2014 session of The South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. As we gather as God's people this week we are called to embrace the theme, "A More Excellent Way: Creating Corridors of Faith, Hope, and Love". This theme invites us as God's people and The United Methodist Church in South Carolina to be mindful of the potential we have as the church to create an environment of positive change in communities throughout our state. This is especially true for many children of South Carolina who have long suffered with little "faith, hope and love" present in their lives. Bishop Holston has called us to the "God-sized" dream of making a difference as we establish corridors that truly offer a more excellent way.

Our major missional effort for our time together is the gathering of one million books - yes that's 1,000,000 - to be distributed to children all over South Carolina. This is indeed a "God-sized" dream that at its completion will impact the lives of thousands. This type of project will no doubt make great headway in the establishment of "corridors of faith, hope, and love" and will allow the United Methodists in South Carolina to collectively join their many gifts for ministry into one life-changing parable. Let us all pray for God to bless this amazing vision of faith, hope and love.

As we gather as the Church may God bless our worship, our church business, and those memorable moments of fellowship between old and new friends! I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers and the countless hours of service given this week, and if the Florence district can do anything to make your stay in Florence a better one please let us know and we'll do our best.

Grace & Peace,

John W. Hipp, Superintendent