



Dear Fellow Redeemed,

During the remaining days of Lent, may your Lenten journey be blessed with drawing near to the cross of Christ. As the hymn writer suggests, “**In the Cross of Christ I Glory,**” may we, together under the cross, glory in the love of our God that extended all the way to the death of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, we too die to sin and live to God. May He fill us with hope and anticipation in our continued journey of faith.

In the previous edition of *Michigan In Touch* I began a series on the **calling of a pastor**. Last time we talked about the initial Congregational Vacancy Visit by the Circuit Counselor,

the Congregation Ministry Facilitator and yours truly. In this issue we continue to look at **the vacancy period in a congregation**.

The question often asked is, “**How long can we expect the vacancy to last?**” This is a difficult question to answer. While many congregations are blessed with acceptance of their first call, others experience the declination of many calls. It needs to be said that the entire calling process is a spiritual process that God blesses according to His good and gracious will. Seeking God’s man in His time enables congregation members and leaders to pull together in meeting the challenge of a vacancy.

A congregation needs pastoral ministry for however long the vacancy lasts. The congregation is guided in the process of securing pastoral ministry by the Circuit Counselor. He will help in arranging for preaching and the coverage of other pastoral duties, usually through a **Vacancy Pastor**. However, an additional option now available is that of an **Intentional Interim Pastor**. When a congregation has been through a particularly difficult period in its life, when a pastor retires who has been a loved long term pastor, when there has been a crisis, or if the congregation needs to define and resolve issues, that congregation may opt for an Intentional Interim Pastor. We have several pastors who have been trained to minister for these specific purposes for a specific period of

time before the calling process is pursued.

The congregation now enters a **congregation self study period**. Usually the Congregation Ministry Facilitator (CMF) works with the congregation to gather data about hopes, fears, needs, and directions. As the congregation is led through this process, a report is produced. The congregation meets together to receive that report and react to it. The CMF then edits and/or revises the report, and develops a **pastoral profile**. When the congregation is satisfied with the report and pastoral profile, the CMF forwards that to me for call list preparation.

Simultaneously, the makeup and task of the **call committee** is addressed. An important first step is to consult the congregational constitution and decide how to proceed. The call committee works closely with the Circuit Counselor. Their work includes requesting names of pastors from the congregation and to communicate progress in the calling process regularly and effectively.

Throughout this process, a sense of anticipation grows toward the calling of a pastor. Alongside, there is a blessed deepening awareness of a congregation’s unique gifts, abilities, and identity and its desired future direction. This information also will be helpful for the pastor who receives the call. If he accepts, it enables him to begin effectively in mission and ministry together with the people.

In next month’s issue of *Michigan In Touch*, I will comment about the preparation of a **call list**, which is a list of potential pastoral candidates. We remember all of those congregations of our district and synod that are vacant and going through the call process. During April some of these vacancies may be filled by the placement of our seminary graduates. We keep this process in our prayers and also pray for these new graduates as they begin their ministry.

At this time of the year, it is also a joy to thankfully recall the gift of loving service that we

receive so exquisitely in Christian mothers. As we anticipate the celebration of **Mother’s Day**, we praise Him for mothers who have preceded us to heaven and we express our appreciation to mothers who continue to share His love with us in our heavenward post-Easter walk.

In Him with you,
C. William Hoesman

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