



## Dear Fellow Redeemed

With the confidence that the Lord is blessing our Lenten reflections, it is also my prayer that the Lord fill us all with the blessed anticipation of the celebration of his grace in Christ on **Easter Sunday**. The Lenten journey does not end at the cross on Good Friday! May our Resurrected and Living Lord bless our continuing worship as we celebrate the joy of His resurrection each new Sunday. May the Lord bless us in the confession and profession of his love not for ourselves only, but also for all.

We have been called together, this side of His resurrection, to be His church. According to His wisdom and plan, He has called us into being as congregations in Word and Sacra-

ment ministry. In order to accomplish the many opportunities of ministry, the staffing of **professional church workers** is critical for the well-being of the church and the extension of the Kingdom.

Our Lord Jesus noted in Matthew 9:37 when speaking to the disciples of that day that “the harvest is plentiful but **the workers are few.**” On the heels of our Lord’s diagnosis of the situation came his invitation to “ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Our prayers and supportive actions are necessary for the provision of workers for the harvest. This issue of *Michigan In Touch* focuses upon that need in our Church.

This is the time that, annually, **graduates** from our Concordia Universities and the Seminaries are placed. In the last week of April, the candidates from our seminaries will be placed. Throughout the remaining spring and early summer graduating Ministers of Religion – Commissioned will also be placed. In this current year, there appears to be enough and perhaps even an over abundance of candidates from the seminaries to fill the calls. However, this is to be short-lived. Projections are that 300–350 new ordained ministers will be needed each year in order to maintain the current situation. Nearly 300 pastors each year either retire or for other reasons experience an end to active pastoral ministry. Other projections have

indicated that the serious **looming shortage** will slowly become a reality over the next seven to eight years.

The church has been blessed by **church work students**, who from their first day of college or university education, have had in mind full-time church work. The church has also been blessed by those who, along the way of their educational journey, have changed to full-time church work. Yet another group is

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that of “second career” pastors who, during their vocational life, have opted for preparation and service in ministry. Additionally, there are others who have taken advantage of the various “ethnic tracks” into pastoral ministry. But even when adding up all of these routes into ministry, the shortage is projected.

The above projections are predicated upon maintaining **only the current number** of pastors. When one adds to the overall view the commitment of the District and Synod to open new mission congregations, the need for Professional Church Workers becomes even more apparent! It is no small coincidence that the District’s 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Thank Offering “The Future Is Now” targets support for Professional Church Work students and the opening of new missions. This resolve connects very well with our

Lord’s comment in Matthew 9 that “the harvest is plentiful.”

The District staff is also impacted by the above. We praise God for the excellent ministry of **Pastor Pete Larsen**, Congregational Ministry Facilitator and Director of Member Services of the District. Pastor Larsen has announced his retirement as of May 31, 2007. Pastor Larsen joined our District staff in 1998 after an outstanding pastoral ministry as pastor of Holy Cross, Jenison for 33 years. God has richly blessed his ministry among us for these last nine years. He will be sorely missed. However, we can only thank God for Pastor Larsen’s ministry and pray God’s blessings upon him and his wife, Pat in this new chapter in their life together in Christ.

May the Lord bless your reading, thinking, reflecting, praying, and acting on this critical issue of **staffing for the mission of the church** in a pluralistic, tolerant society. It is a society that does not possess, apart from Jesus Christ, “the peace that passes understanding.” Let us thank the Lord for the gift of workers for the harvest and fervently seek to increase the laborers that we would be able to say the laborers are “many.” God be praised and may His Kingdom be extended.

In Him with you,  
C. William Hoesman