



## Dear Fellow Redeemed,

As the months of December and January are highlighted with special holidays, one is reminded of the desire of family and friends to gather to worship, to observe, and to celebrate. In spite of challenges of snowy, icy roads and the like, travel is necessary for such gatherings. **It is the season to travel!** It seems to me that such travel activity can point us to a loving Heavenly Father whose Son traveled from eternity into time. Our Lord Jesus not only traveled from eternity into time, He arrived at the right time in God's plan of salvation, as the Scripture says, "at the right time God sent forth His Son." [Gal. 4:4] Jesus, sent from eternity, traveled to Bethlehem as the greatest Gift, the Gift of life and salvation. In addition,

Mary and Joseph's traveling to Bethlehem brought them and all the world great joy.

It is also a great joy to thank and praise God for the congregations of the Michigan District and the professional church workers who travel about in His service. Thus, we **continue our series on the calling of a pastor.** A special new year's hope for congregations calling a pastor is that the Lord would lead them in receiving the pastor that He has in mind for them.

In previous issues, we reached the point at which the call had been extended and the congregation eagerly awaits the decision of the pastor. This period of **a pastor considering a call** generally lasts up to four weeks. There is much at work! It is good to remember that this is a **divine call** that has been issued. As the pastor considers this divine call, the Holy Spirit is at work in a divinely guided process. Three aspects of God's will are at work during this decision-making period. First, the Spirit is at work and has a will regarding the pastor who is deliberating the call. As he evaluates his ministry in his current context and the challenge of the ministry in the calling congregation, the Spirit guides and directs the pastor's thought process.

As the pastor deliberates the call, and **the calling congregation** awaits his decision, the same Spirit is at work in the calling congregation. People join together in prayer. They may have opportunity to meet

with the pastor, if he chooses to visit the congregation during the period of deliberation. The congregation has the opportunity to reflect upon the call, upon their choice of their pastor-elect, and wait upon God's will in the matter.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is at work in the **congregation whose pastor has been called.** Often there is discussion between the pastor and his current congregation. The pastor prayerfully considers his challenge and his future should he remain in that congregation and considers it alongside the challenges he will face in the calling congregation.

In this process, it can be that there appears to be conflicting prayers going to the heavenly throne. One congregation prays the pastor would come while the other prays he would stay with them! However, for all those involved, the pastor-elect, the calling congregation, and the congregation whose pastor has been called, it is important that "**Thy will be done**" be an integral part of all the prayers that are offered. God indeed has a plan in the matter. His kingdom includes both congregations and the pastor. Our Lord has a purpose that will bring about good in the hearts and lives of all involved. As all seek His will and patiently await its unfolding, it is done with the confidence that God is faithful. In the next issue in this series, we will discuss the pastor's decision to accept or decline the call.

As this holiday **travel season** includes Epiphany, it too centers around travel, the travel of the wisemen to worship, to adore, and then continue their journey home by another way at God's direction. God-directed travel is that which brings great peace, joy, and hope to this season. We travel not only to be together with family, but spiritually we travel to the manger and then travel on in a life of faith and service. May God be with us as we worship, travel to be with family

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and friends and travel together on the way to the heaven that our Lord Jesus grants us. May He grant a blessed Advent, a joyous Christmas, an unfolding Epiphany, and a New Year of grace.

In Him with you,  
C. William Hoesman