



Dear Fellow Redeemed

While this issue of *Michigan In Touch* is in the usual bi-monthly edition, the particular combination of months, December and January, is an interesting pairing of months. It places side-by-side **the last** and **the first** months of 2005 and 2006. A way to observe the last and the first is to “celebrate” and “anticipate.” In December we celebrate the birth of Christ. We are filled with the joy of celebrating God’s greatest gift of His Son which gives reason to the exchange of gifts that we share with each other. Through all this celebration, relationships are blessed and grow. The growth aspect is that which fills us with anticipation at the

first month of a new year. A fresh start is more than possible because we enter the New Year in the company of our Savior who has come to dwell among us. May we find the joy of celebration in this last month of the year as we sing “**Christ the Savior is born**” and the joy of anticipation in the first month of a new year as we sing “**Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come.**”

This theme of celebration and anticipation flows through the articles in this edition of *Michigan In Touch*. In the celebration of life, we anticipate **Life Sunday** in January 2006, appropriately following the festival of the Epiphany of our Lord. All around us we see evidence of the destruction and the devaluing of human life. May we eagerly anticipate opportunities to bear witness to God’s love and concern for every human life. May the Lord of Life grant that our witness be clear to a world that knows not His love.

In the aftermath of **Katrina**, the wonderful response of the many relief efforts is reason to celebrate and anticipate. There is great news about the wonderful examples of our people and congregations providing care and support. Our unique way of responding as congregations of the District, organized by region, is proving very beneficial. How inspiring it is to hear the witness of

so many people who celebrate their blessings even in the face of such massive damages. **Thank you** to all who are involved in support of the relief effort. We eagerly anticipate the time when congregations, schools and ministries affected by these disasters will see their hopes fulfilled and their mission and ministry continue even more effectively.

**“Christ the Savior is born ...
Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come.”**

An additional application of “the last” and “the first” is to note with joy and thanksgiving the ministry of **Dr. George Locke**. We celebrate his long and productive ministry. December is his last month as Superintendent of Schools of the Michigan District. He will step into the New Year in anticipation of a new and well earned chapter in his life of faith and service. With grateful hearts we celebrate the many contributions George has made to quality Christian education among us. Elsewhere in this issue, please note the article regarding George and his gifts in ministry. May the Lord bless George in new avenues and opportunities of service. May God be praised for George and Elise and grant them eager anticipation of His presence each new day.

The last month of a year and anticipation of the promise of a new year also serve as a reminder that while our days on this earth are numbered, in Christ we anticipate the sure and certain hope of the new and everlasting life that He has promised. What a blessing Christians have when, by faith in Christ, we lay hold of eternal life both now and forever. One of the blessings of heaven will be reunion with all those who have died in Christ. Thus we celebrate the life and ministry of another of the great and beloved saints of God, **Dr. Oswald Hoffmann**. Throughout his ministry, which by the grace of God lasted almost 70 years, Dr. Hoffmann served as a beacon pointing millions to the Lord of Life, our Savior Jesus Christ. What joy it is to anticipate hearing his booming voice again when we join with the saints and angels in praising God in the heavenly chorus!

Finally, we celebrate Advent and Christmas and anticipate the blessed hope of a New Year. May the Babe of Bethlehem, who is the Lord of time and eternity, bless our celebration and anticipation of His life-giving life-sustaining and kingdom-building presence. God grant a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

In Him with you,
C. William Hoesman