



## Dear Fellow Redeemed

We stand at the brink of that wonderful time of the year signaled by our hearing and/or singing the strains of the familiar Advent hymn “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel.” It signals the beginning of Advent and our entrance into one of the busiest seasons of the year. As the celebration of our Lord’s birth draws nearer, the words “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel” give way to Christmas songs and carols as well as the season’s greetings. These are the familiar greetings of “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year.” Perhaps these greetings are spoken perfunctorily at times, but most often are spoken sincerely with care and concern for the ones with whom we share such greetings.

As one who is anxious to begin sharing those greetings, the question arises as to when is it appropriate to begin speaking such greetings. Is it halfway through Advent, a week before Christmas, or another time? However, it seems that the beginning of Advent is too early to begin expressing the season’s greetings! Therefore, a new greeting comes to mind *Happy New Church Year!* Such a greeting could be appropriate from the first moment of Advent as we begin a new Christian Church Year. We focus on the promise of Christ’s coming through Scripture, His birth, His daily coming in our hearts, and, finally, the anticipation of His Second Coming. To recognize and celebrate such, we gather for Advent worship. This and other preparations of the season such as Advent wreaths, Advent calendars, and other faith and family traditions prepare us and fill our hearts toward sharing greetings. We respond to the dimensions of Jesus’ love which is here for us and via our greetings we communicate to others “**His Love Is Here For You.**”

At the risk of pushing these greeting ideas too far, please allow one more suggestion. It probably will not “take” and grow in usage; one could wish another *Happy Year Ending!* An appropriate meaning of “end” is that of a goal or an objective. This greeting may sound strange to those who want to get quickly to “Happy New Year.” Some folks may rather lament the past year and celebrate its ending. Some only look for a fresh start and a new and better year full of more hope. However, there is reason to celebrate God’s grace of 2007. It is an opportunity to reflect on what has been accomplished among us during the year ending. It is not an attempt to hang on to the good old days of 2007, but to recognize that there was much good in 2007.

This issue of *Michigan In Touch* relates several

evidences of ends/goals that were begun, built upon, and fulfilled in 2007. The pages show examples of that which points us to great hope for future ministry and blessings. We praise God for building and extending His Kingdom among us, personally and as the Church, during 2007. May this give us blessed anticipation however we use any of the traditional or new greetings. This thought is nicely captured in a little known hymn stanza “Test the challenge and the vision of a world yet to be won, and with boldness and decision **build on what was here begun.**” May the Lord bless your personal and congregational celebration of ends/goals met in 2007 and bless our planning for 2008.

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The Michigan District staff celebrates “ends” accomplished in 2007 and looks forward with great anticipation to new opportunities to serve. We are currently experiencing a vacancy in the **Large Church Congregation Ministry Facilitator** position. However, the Board of

Directors has issued a call to Pastor Luther Brunette of Carmel Lutheran Church in Carmel, Indiana. Pastor Brunette is an excellent pastor who is gifted by our Heavenly Father. Our prayer is that the Lord lead him through the decision-making process according to His will as to where he can best serve for building and extending the Kingdom.

As District Staff, we continue to thank and praise God for the opportunity to serve among you. It is our hope and prayer that you will be filled with the peace and power of the presence of our Lord. We pray that He grant you a blessed Advent, inclusive of celebrating a *Happy New Church Year*, a *Happy Year Ending*, a faith deepening **Christmas celebration**, and a New Year of ever increasing faith, hope and strength.

In Him with You,  
C. William Hoesman