



Dear Fellow Redeemed

It has been an eventful Autumn filled with all the additional activities surrounding national and local elections. Pervading all the political activities and other business of the season is the continued unfolding of economic news that is difficult to hear. Now we suddenly approach **Advent**, the anticipation of the **Christmas** celebration and the beginning of a **New Year**. People are often heard to remark that the year passed by so quickly! It hardly seems time again to start Advent preparations.

However, of all the years, this is one in which it seems particularly appropriate to begin a focus on the Advent of our King. We begin the preparations to reflect on His coming at

Bethlehem and the meaning of His life, death and resurrection for us. This naturally leads us to focus upon our desire for His coming daily into this era of history as the people of God in the current context. It flows very nicely, also, that our faith eyes are lifted to look to the future in anticipation of His coming again. Preparation, celebration and anticipation are made possible through **our Lord Jesus Christ who is the hope of the world**. Of all years, the Advent message of hope blesses us with the sure hope that is ours in Jesus Christ. May all of our Advent activities, in focusing upon Christ, build hope among us. May we be so strengthened that we witness that hope within us to a world who hungers for it, whether they are aware of it or not.

The sharing of this hope finds expression in **caring for one another**. While this year's gift-giving may not be as extravagant as in the past, we have that which is most precious to give. We are reminded of the truth of Galatians 6: 9-10 and are encouraged to "... *not become weary in doing good...as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*" As we seek to serve others by building hope in their lives, we are mutually strengthened as the "family of believers." Together we may extend that hope to those who do not yet

celebrate Christmas in spirit and in truth. This issue of *Michigan In Touch* focuses upon **caring ministry**. Most of us find a measure of fulfillment in someone complimenting our congregation by calling it a "friendly congregation." While we find joy in that, is it not a greater joy to hear someone's comment that ours is a "caring congregation?" This caring draws people into the love of Christ and grants

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the precious gift of hope no matter what their circumstance.

As you read the articles that highlight caring ministry, they are but a few examples of **caring ministry in action**. In reading, may you also reflect on caring ministry in your congregation. Regarding those who are involved in caring ministry, it would certainly be appropriate to thank and encourage them in this important work. You are also invited to consider how caring ministry might grow in new directions in your congregation. May God bless your thought, your commitment and your efforts in the blessed work of caring ministry this Advent and Christmas as well as into a hope-filled New Year.

Applying the caring theme to District ministry, we care about how effectively we communicate to you in the congregations of the District. One avenue of communication among us is *Michigan In Touch*. Our desire is to find **ways to improve Michigan In Touch** to serve you better. You may have noticed the red check on the lower right hand corner of the cover of this issue. Please also note the request on page 18. Our invitation to you is to go to the District website and take a couple minutes to provide important feedback. If you desire a paper copy of the survey, that information is also included on page 18. Thank you, in advance, for helping us serve more effectively to Jesus' glory and the extension of His kingdom.

Please know, amidst all the activities during this season of the year, that our District staff continues to work together, thankful for the opportunity to serve you. It is indeed **our Christmas greeting and prayer** that the Lord bless us in the opportunity of providing the hope of Jesus Christ in the midst of a needful world. Our staff prays that our Advent King, our Christmas Savior, and the Lord of the Ages grant you and yours a blessed Advent, a Joyous Christmas celebration and a hope-filled New Year. May God grant it for Jesus sake.

In Him with You,
C. William Hoesman