



Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. My wish for each of you is that God grant you a lively anticipation of His grace in a New Year. It continues to be my prayer that we, the congregations of the Michigan District, banded together as members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, present the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that many will be drawn to it. May He warm us in that Light, enlighten our steps in daily service and lead us to the glorious light of eternity.

While one could comment about the season of the year from a time standpoint or even from the liturgical calendar (Ash Wednesday is March 5), there is another “season” that comes to mind. This is the time for congregations to apply for pastors from the Spring graduating class. This happens in congregations who are “vacant” in a pastoral position. As the congregations of the District apply and wait to see if their request is filled, there is a sense of anticipation and an awareness of God’s blessing. There is also a continuing reminder not all of the requests can be filled.

However, vacancies and calling pastors continue throughout the course of the year. As pastors accept calls, retire or leave for other reasons, positions become vacant. Vacant simply means that the congregation is vacant a pastor. The ministry continues in the congregation for the ministry is given to the congregation. Such realities are what lead me to share with you in this issue of *Michigan In Touch* and in several succeeding issues, a focus upon **the calling of a pastor**.

In years gone by the calling of a pastor was somewhat different than the process today. With the advance of communication, ease of transportation and the like, the call process and a pastor’s consideration of a call to a congregation is quite different. It is our continuing prayer that the process that has developed to this day is one that is very helpful to the congregations in their desire to call and happily install their new pastor.

When a congregation becomes vacant in the Michigan District, we have begun Congregational Vacancy Visits. The Circuit Counselor, the Congregation Ministry Facilitator and yours truly meet with the congregation. At this meeting, plans and thoughts regarding the vacancy, the calling process and the

It is our continuing prayer that the (call) process that has developed to this day is one that is very helpful to the congregations in their desire to call and happily install their new pastor.

goal of a day of installation are discussed. The Circuit Counselor serves the vacant congregation in providing for the immediate ministry needs. Our Circuit Counselors do an outstanding job at this! The Congregation Ministry Facilitator works with the congregation in taking an inward look, an assessment, a focus upon plans and hopes for the future as well as helping the congregation to develop a desirable Pastoral Profile. That helps in finding pastors with gifts and abilities in pastoral ministry to be a wonderful shepherd for the congregation. Then it is my role to take this information from the congregation, via the Circuit Counselor and the Congregation Ministry Facilitator, to prayerfully seek men from the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri

Synod who would fit well.

In the early stage of a vacancy, the concern is to cover the ministry needs, to provide for pastoral service and to begin to work toward completion of the call process. In succeeding issues of *Michigan In Touch* my thoughts will focus on the length of the vacancy, expectations, opportunities and obstacles during a vacancy, preparation of a call list, and finally, the extending of a call and the decision making process for the pastor.

It is my hope and prayer for those of you reading this who are in a vacant congregation, that the Lord lead us under His good and gracious will to that man He has in mind to serve you as your pastor. For those of you whose congregations’ pastoral office is filled at this time, may it stay that way! Yet, in each instance, we all are blessed by the Lordship of Christ and His leadership of His church.

Finally it is a joy to announce that **Rev. Dean Wachholz has accepted our call as District Director of Development**. We welcome him and his wife Betty. There is more complete information on page 24 of this issue. We pray for God’s blessings as we work with available resources to accomplish God’s mission of nurturing the saved and seeking the lost. To that end may His Light shine upon and through us.

In Him with you,
C. William Hoesman