

125th Anniversary Thank Offering

The Board of Directors of the Michigan District, as the caretaker of the vision and mission of the District, has determined that two of the long term goals for the congregations of the Michigan District are: Intentional Mission Development and Recruiting, supporting, and deploying Professional Church Worker Students. While the Michigan District has been blessed for many years with wonderful pastors and teachers, within ten years there will be a shortage of professional church workers due to the staffing of new mission congregations as well as the retirement and death of the current workforce.

Even though there are 235,000 individuals in over 375 congregations in the Michigan District, the need for intentional mission development to reach out to the lost with the saving gospel message of Jesus Christ is urgent today. There are many areas in the state in which 50% or more of the people are unchurched. It is in these areas that the District seeks to fulfill the goal of beginning new mission congregations.

“The Future is Now” provides a unique opportunity for the congregations and members of the churches to provide a wonderful thank offering for the blessings received from our Lord. Each of us should rise to these continuing challenges, and make a difference for the future that can only happen through shared purpose and common goals.

To disciple the saved and evangelize the lost has been a consistent message throughout the history of the Michigan District and its congregations. While our efforts to date are commendable, there are still people who do not know of the life-changing, saving grace of Jesus. Rev. Paul Werner, Missionary at Large for the Michigan District in 2005 summarized these thoughts when he said, “After 125 years, we’ve far from reached the people of Michigan. There are so many unchurched folks who don’t know Christ, they would be lost forever unless we reach them with the Gospel.” That is what the 125 year history of the Michigan District is about, bringing people to Jesus.

The Michigan District has a wonderful history of men and women who have answered the call of Matthew 9:37-38, “Then he said to his disciples ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’” In 2004, almost 200 Michigan District professional church work students attended our seminaries, universities, and colleges. Yet the need for



Mr. Ronald Steinke, CEO of the Michigan District Church Extension, handed President Hoesman a check in the amount of \$350,000 to cover all administrative costs and development costs so that every dollar that is donated will go towards the fund. He then presented a check in the amount of up to \$1,000,000. For every \$1,000,000 raised, CEF will match it with \$100,000.

Professional Church Workers at this time in the history of the Church cannot be overstated.” Rev. Galen Gruelke from Heart of the Shepherd echoes those words, “With more mission churches being planted and those reaching out to those that do not know Jesus Christ, we need more and more full time church workers.” While we clearly need additional students, the financial support to assist those who have answered the call in past years has been far below the cost of tuition and expenses. In the past five years the support has averaged about \$400 per student. “The Future is Now” campaign seeks to address these issues.

With the anticipated shortfall of workers due to additional outreach opportunities with synod wide mission development, retirements and death the Michigan District through your support, wants to turn the tide for the next five years to encourage more men and women to follow the call the Lord offers.

“The Future in Now” is a three-year campaign which targets raising \$10,000,000 to directly support mission development and recruiting and supporting professional church work students.

At the convention, the Michigan District Church Extension Fund (CEF) gave the Michigan District a check in the amount of \$350,000 to completely cover the administrative costs of the campaign. CEF also presented a check that represented the amount of \$1,000,000. For every \$1,000,000 raised, CEF will match it with \$100,000.