



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# Minnesota South District

*...developing leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God*

December 19, 2018

*“O come, Thou Dayspring from on high, And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh”*

(LSB 357 stz. 6)

Dear brother in Christ,

Waiting. That’s what you’re doing. It probably doesn’t feel much like that right now, with all your scurrying around in these final frantic days just before Christmas, but when you get right down to it, most pastors are waiting in one way or another.

Some of you have recently been installed in a new call and are waiting to see what’s in store in your new ministry. Many are waiting for change in your congregation after pouring a whole lot of energy into teaching, motivating, and equipping—with few apparent results. Others of you are wearing out—you’re waiting for a call elsewhere. Some, quite honestly, are waiting for retirement. And some who are retired are waiting for someone to include you and make use of your wisdom and experience.

A lot of us are waiting for people—people in our parish, brothers in ministry, leaders in our church—to “get it” (whatever “it” might be). If only others would see things our way, then life would be a lot easier.

During Advent, we wait. Not just for Christmas, of course, but for our Lord Christ himself. As He came long ago wrapped in infant human flesh, so He comes now in the Word you speak and the Sacrament you distribute even as we await His final coming at the end of time in eternal glory.

And that’s what you need, too. I know because I’ve been there myself. Sliding statistics: declining finances, declining membership and attendance, declining involvement and participation. It’s all enough to get a good man down.

Dear brother, your help is in the Name of the Lord. Your worth is not measured in statistics but in His sacred body given into death for you and His most holy blood poured out for you. Your consolation lies not in your achievements but in Him who loves you without reservation. Your hope is not in working harder or longer or smarter but in doing His work among the people and community He entrusted to your care. *“I will never leave you nor forsake you,”* Jesus promised His church. And that promise stands true for pastors just as well.

You see, the Lord Jesus is waiting, too. He’s waiting for you to repent and return to Him. He’s waiting for you to turn from your misbeliefs and idolatries and find your life in Him for a change—a true and lasting change, by His grace.

But there’s no waiting for Jesus’ love. He’s always ready to forgive and restore. Thank God! For all your sins, there is mercy. For all your wounds, healing. In Christ Jesus, just as there is forgiveness for every sin, there is balm for every aching heart and hurting soul. *“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,”* He invites. Yes, if we confess our sins, He remains faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, which includes things you’ve done and those things done to you.

In this holy season, my family and I pray God’s grace, peace, and abiding joy for you and yours. As you await Christ’s coming, rejoice that He has come for you!

Your brother in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford