

## **Editor's Notes:**

In this issue, the director of the Moravian Music Foundation, Nola Reed Knouse, presents a summary of her 2002 Moses Lectures given under the auspices of Moravian Theological Seminary. Dr. Knouse explores the complex issues of music in Christian worship and offers concrete suggestions both for improving our Moravian worship and overcoming the destructive barriers we have erected over music in Church. Dr. Knouse helps clarify that underlying issues are not “traditional” versus “contemporary,” but questions of quality and integrity.

Music is one of the things we treasure in the Moravian Church. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that congregational singing was one of the reasons for the Hussite separation from the Catholic Church. Our church published one of the first Protestant hymnals in the sixteenth century, and in the eighteenth century published thousands of hymns and liturgies. Part of the liturgical innovation of the Moravian Church was to create entire worship services that were sung through. Music unites, inspires, and moves our deepest emotions.

Music also divides, diminishes, and angers us. There are many churches (including the early Unity of the Brethren) that see music as too sensual and egocentric for worship. The fact that only some have the talent and training to play musical instruments makes music suspect in many “low church” congregations. Some churches see music as a vain and extravagant waste of money, preferring simple hymns in a simple sanctuary.

There is also the new social reality that music is ubiquitous in America. We have become consumers of music rather than producers, and in doing so, music has become individualistic. We increasingly define ourselves by our musical tastes or even periods of pop music. Songs we heard in our youth become part of our personality. We often confuse the sentimentality of hearing familiar music from our formative adolescent years with the deep emotional and intellectual response that art can produce.

Our respondents represent different perspectives musically and theologically, but all agree that congregational singing is a matter of great consequence. It should be part of the overall benefit people of faith receive from coming together as the church and it is part of our witness as a community.

This is vitally important to Moravians because so much of our theology is communicated through liturgy and song. Music and liturgy unite us as a distinct community of faith. It seems to me that if we preach from the lectionary, pray from the liturgies, observe the liturgical calendar, and sing from the Book of Worship, there will be little danger that our congregations will be anything other than Moravian churches.

*In the next issue of the Hinge: Racial Matters in the Moravian Church. How well are we fulfilling the Ground of the Unity when it comes to discrimination and prejudice in our church?*