

concentrating on other goals together. In the New Haven arts project mentioned above, students as a group developed stories, staged them, added sound, movement, and scenery, and videotaped the stories as scenarios. The students were completely and unselfconsciously intermixed racially. At the family retreat previously cited, the focus was on Bible study. In Winston-Salem, the interracial project known as CHANGE (Communities Helping All Gain Empowerment) is a grass roots coalition working successfully to resolve various civic problems.

➤ **Celebrate diversity.** It is important for people to gain respect for each other's accomplishments. One of the best ways is through public presentations (even if the public is just our congregations). Let's bring together choirs from white and minority churches to sing for and with each other. Surely there are talented artists in our congregations who could come together for an exhibit of their works, perhaps with "gallery talks." No doubt, there are many other possibilities.

I submit the above suggestions as ways that Moravians can, as Kathryn Woestendick Scepanski puts it, "move beyond the walls of our own making."

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Charlotte Disher

First of all, I would like to say how honored I am to have been asked to respond to Kathryn Woestendick Scepanski's article "Race and Faith in the Moravian Church" in *The Hinge*, particularly on a topic that is as near and dear to my heart as race relations. I was born and raised in New England, but I have made North Carolina my home for the past twenty-three years. I have been a committed Moravian for fifteen of those twenty-three years and I am currently a rising third-year Divinity student at Wake Forest University Divinity School in Winston-Salem, N.C. After I graduate, I will undoubtedly work in urban ministry setting: embracing the poor, standing beside the downtrodden, and working toward racial harmony together with my brothers and sisters of color, if I am privileged enough to be entrusted with a part in this vital mission toward unity. How can I be so certain of this vocational calling, one might ask? The answer is quite simply providential. To borrow a phrase from the title of a life-changing book by Parker J. Palmer, it will be high time I "let my life speak."

Prior to this call into the professional ministry, I patrolled the streets of Winston-Salem as a beat cop for fifteen years. I desperately tried to fulfill my oath of office, "to protect and serve" the citizens of Winston-Salem as impartially as the law and the Criminal Justice System would allow, but neither the laws themselves nor the system that upholds those laws embraces such impartiality. Everything within that archaic and impenetrable system is either black or white, right or wrong, good or bad, legal or illegal, and people are either guilty or not guilty in

the eyes of the law. If only reality and the people who live and function within it were indeed as straightforward as the Criminal Justice System would have them to be! Thankfully, however, they are not and my complex view of our diverse world did not meld with such a clear-cut yet intrinsically flawed perspective on reality.

While working from within that dichotomous Criminal Justice System, many African American citizens hated me, for good reason, because of the color of my skin and the stigma of hatred associated with the uniform I wore. It was not until I sat watching a slide-show in an orientation session for Divinity School in August of 2001 that I was spiritually jarred awake by the imagery of a youthful Martin Luther King, Jr. in handcuffs, being led away by two uniformed patrol officers. Then I fully grasped the deep-seated hatred I, in my white skin wearing that blue uniform, had repeatedly rekindled within many African Americans in our community. I knew then and there that my new vocational calling would quite probably entail me wearing the handcuffs, not carrying them, and that was just fine with me!

As I read Scepanski's article, a most glaring and surprising omission leapt off the pages at me at every turn. Although each of the persons interviewed for Scepanski's article, and even Scepanski herself, espoused progressive ideals about race relations from their own personal experiences, not one of these people referred to either *The Ground of the Unity* or *The Covenant of Christian Living* as a basis for their observations, behaviors, or beliefs. It saddens me, especially in light of recent divisive issues surrounding *The Ground of the Unity*, that we Moravians do not turn to these vital and living documents more often

for direction and guidance in such challenging matters as race relations. I find both of these foundational Moravian statements of faith and life as fluid and thriving as the Holy Scriptures themselves and I am certain that the original authors, as well as the more recent editors, fully intended that to be so!

Both *The Ground of the Unity* and *The Covenant of Christian Living* are very clear when it comes to the subject of racial equality and the like. There is little, if any, room for doubt about where all members of the Moravian Church, its laity and clergy alike, are currently supposed to stand on these issues. The former states, "We oppose any discrimination in our midst because of ethnic origin, sex, or social standing, and we regard it as a *commandment* of the Lord to bear public witness to this and to demonstrate by word and deed that we are brothers and sisters in Christ." The latter goes even farther than that in making a universal statement, based in Scripture, which affirms, "Because we hold that *all people are God's creatures* (Genesis 1:27) and that [God] has made of one blood all nations (Acts 17:26), we oppose any discrimination based on color, race, creed, or land of origin and declare that we should treat everyone with love and respect." The language in both of these seminal Moravian documents is precise, indisputable and direct.

Each of us, as committed members of the worldwide Moravian Church, has a covenantal as well as Scriptural "command" to "oppose" racial discrimination in not just one, but two, sound Moravian documents. Not only are we to seek racial harmony "in our midst," which I interpret to mean *within our local communities*,

we are to “bear public witness” to positive and progressive, race relations among “all nations” upon the soil of our own backyards. Scepanski has sown some of these positive seeds, to use her own words, by writing and ensuring the publication of this article. Those persons interviewed and quoted in her article have also been sowing their own seeds of racial reconciliation in myriad and wonderfully unique ways along their individual life paths.

I implore each one of you reading this written response to revisit both vibrant Moravian documents known as *The Ground of the Unity* and *The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living* and read them carefully through to their conclusion. Then, ask yourself what type and where you have sown seeds of racial reconciliation lately? If you cannot remember or simply do not know the answer to these two simple questions, might I suggest “listening for the voice of vocation” (the subtitle to Parker Palmer’s book, which I referred to at the beginning of my response) once again in your life? It worked for me!

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Neil Thomlinson

The lead article by Sister Kathryn Woestendiek Scepanski raises two important and interconnected questions for the North American Moravian Church: the way it handles “race relations” (or what we Canadians prefer to call “ethnic diversity”) generally and, more specifically, the way its perception of ethnic diversity affects Moravian outreach within North America. In the words of the lead article, this is about the way the North American Moravian Church handles the challenges faced “when it comes to sewing seeds in its own backyard.”

Although the thesis of the lead article is not stated explicitly, I read it as a two-part argument. First, the article seems to argue that, notwithstanding the notable exceptions cited, a form of racism is alive and well in the Moravian Church. This argument is supported by the continuing positive correlation between the skin colour of the pastor and that of his/her congregation. The second, less developed, argument seems to be that Moravian outreach in rapidly growing non-white-European communities is inadequate, and that this can be at least partially explained by the presence of some form of racism within the North American Moravian Church. These are certainly arguments that demand thoughtful consideration.

In responding, I’m going to try to push the analysis a little further in four ways. First, I’ll set out a working definition of “racism” as the word itself tends to stir up a controversy that inhibits the rational discussion of attendant problems. Second, I’ll explore a couple of models intended to promote peaceful coexistence at the level of the nation-state and ask whether there are from those