

Notes from the Editor

The Ground of the Unity states: *We oppose any discrimination in our midst because of race or 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.*

According to C. Daniel Crews and Richard Starbuck's history of the Southern Province, *With Courage for the Future: The Story of the Moravian Church, Southern Province* (Winston-Salem: Moravian Archives, 2002), the earliest use of the *Ground of the Unity* to resolve a conflict in the Southern Province was on the matter of race. The question was whether African-American Moravians could attend the summer camp and play in the Easter Band. The answer in the early 1960s was "yes" (p. 669). In large part because of the firm stance of the *Ground of the Unity*, Moravians in North Carolina chose to break with a long cultural (and legal) tradition of segregation because it was what Christ would have wanted them to do.

Unfortunately, racism remains a reality in the Moravian Church, just as it does in America. Things are much improved from the days of separate drinking fountains, voter intimidation, and socially-acceptable terrorism, but we have not entered the Promised Land. It is hard to overcome centuries of prejudice and division. Some things cannot be changed by laws or doctrinal statements; they require an opening of our eyes and a change of our hearts.

About ten years ago, we gave our daughter a Cabbage-Patch doll we named Naomi. Sarah loved Naomi and took her with her to church and many other places, but Naomi bothered a lot of people. For some people in New Jersey where we lived, in Pennsylvania where we worshiped, and in North Carolina where we visited family, it was wrong for a white child to love a black doll. We saw people take Naomi out of Sarah's hands and replace her with a white doll. We found Naomi hidden under furniture. We had people tell us that we shouldn't let her carry that doll because it might offend people.

I never knew a child's beloved doll could be so threatening, but she was. Sarah is now a pre-teen, and it is good to see that she has an inter-racial group of friends at school. She is not bothered that we live in an inter-racial neighborhood or that her new principal is African-American. I like to think that Naomi made a small but significant difference in the world.

The Ninth Women's Conference held in this summer demonstrated the great racial and cultural diversity of our intimate community of faith. It also highlighted things that continue to divide us and cause needless pain. There is a long road ahead of us, but if we remain faithful to Christ, we will see the world transformed.

In this issue of *The Hinge*, Kathryn Woestendiek Scepanski reminds us that the Moravian Church continues to make a small, significant difference in the world. She has provided us with a different type of *Hinge* article in that it is based on extensive interviews with Moravians around the country who have been actively involved in inter-racial work over the past half-century. We have fewer respondents than usual because Sr. Scepanski's article reflects the views (and words) of over a dozen Moravians rather than just her own. Our respondents include a bishop of the unity, a former police officer, a retired professor, a current professor, and a retired editor. Two are clergy and three are lay persons.