

brothers whom many still attempt to marginalize and keep out of the circle?

All said and done, I am faced with a question; “how has Sister Kathryn’s article impacted me?” Simply this: If I am to err in drawing the line, let it be in redrawing an ever-widening circle to be inclusive of all of God’s children. I believe this is what Christ is calling us to do. However, it just may be that we still have to figure out just what it means to truly follow the one Head of our Church and Lord of our lives, Jesus the Christ.

The Right Reverend Paul A. Graf is a retired pastor and serves as a bishop of the Moravian Unity.

Edward J. P. O’Connor

Kathryn Woestendick Scepanski has written an important and timely article (witness the rededication of St. Philips Moravian Church in Old Salem on May 4, 2003). The article gains in validity from the fact that she has not just stated her own opinions but has allowed people to speak for themselves from their varied perspectives. It would be a shame, however, if we did not move beyond discussion to action. I would like to make a few suggestions based on literature, observation, and past experience.

I am not experienced enough in Moravian missions and the call process to be very definitive on church planting outside the Moravian community and on increasing the number of minority ministers in our churches. However, it would seem that Synod resolutions would move church planting to a top priority. And, if the Moravian Church is not training enough minority ministers, it may be necessary, as Brother Wilde suggested, to look outside the denomination. I have had enough experience with affirmative action (having chaired several search committees at the University of Connecticut) to know that the key is not quotas; the key is communication. It is necessary to be certain that qualified minority candidates are informed of openings and encouraged to apply. It is equally necessary for Provincial officers to communicate with churches and guide them toward these candidates.

Following are some principles for “moving beyond the walls” on other issues.

➤ **Invitation.** I have frequently heard people say, “Our doors are open to anyone who wants to come, regardless of race, social status,” etc. But as Brother Breland noted, many people do not

know about the Moravian Church and may be reluctant to enter those doors. Brother Belfield said, “we should be open to ministering to anybody in the community.” White churches need to be more aggressive in reaching out to people in the community. Members can invite minority people to their services and programs whenever they encounter them as individuals, and they can invite groups: church boards, committees, youth, seniors, fellowship groups, etc. They must then be prepared to welcome the visitors, introduce them to people, invite them to Sunday School classes, and the like. It does not accomplish much if minorities simply attend a service, occupying the same space as church members, but do not interact with anyone. The objective initially probably should not be to increase membership, because the people invited may be members of other churches, but rather, as Brother Sommers stated, to “experience the richness of the body of Christ through diversity and cultural interchange.” If some later choose to join, that is a bonus.

➤ **Preparation.** Unfortunately, we become set in our ways. Brother Breland pointed out that various churches may have different styles of worship. And Sister Volpe said that, “Not every person of color is from the same culture and each culture can have a very different worldview.” If groups with different traditions are invited to a Moravian service, or vice versa, it might be well to have a representative from a given church prepare the others for what they will encounter. For example, the late Prof. Pearl Williams Jones, an authority on the history of spirituals and gospel music, described the fact that most white congregations sing hymns with the same style and intensity for all of the verses, while in black churches, the objective is to build in intensity

to an emotional peak at the last verse. Other African retentions in performance style include the “call and response” song form, repetition and variation, movement to the music, and clapping. An orientation to a style of worship might be presented during a worship service, a reception after the service, a special Sunday or Wednesday night program, or a meeting of a particular group that plans to attend the other church (youth, for example).

➤ **Introduction.** For people of different backgrounds to interact successfully, it is important to break the barrier of anonymity immediately. A project in New Haven, CT, in 1974-78, brought together middle school students from predominantly black and predominantly white schools for an extended experience in the arts. The premise was that an arts experience would promote positive racial interaction. In the first session the students learned the names of everyone else in the group so that they were no longer strangers. Then they did a series of activities that mixed everyone in a non-threatening way (build a human “machine,” with each person being a different part). The project was very successful.

In the fall of 2002 members of a black church and a white church met together at Laurel Ridge for a weekend family retreat. They, also, started with an activity in which everyone got acquainted and soon felt comfortable with each other. Discussion groups were organized not by race or church affiliation, but by month of birth. People were mixed in a manner that helped avoid the pitfall that Sister Volpe mentioned of people feeling that they were being treated differently.

➤ **Seeing Ourselves.** Several times I have heard people say, “When I was growing up, we

didn't think about segregation as being wrong. That's just the way things were." It is difficult to observe and analyze our own thoughts and behaviors, especially when, as Brother Weber noted, "People can grow up in white churches and just assume that Moravians everywhere are just like them." In 1964, Arensberg and Niehoff wrote a book for Peace Corps workers called *Introducing Social Change* to help them understand the cultures in which they would be working. But, the authors included a chapter on American Cultural Values so that the workers would be aware of the impression they would make on others and sources of conflict. Sometimes it is necessary to confront our perceptions, or lack of them, directly. There are some models for doing this. The Interprovincial Faith and Order Commission published a document in 1998, "Racism and the Church: A Study of the Church's Statement on Racism." It includes a guide for four one-hour study sessions with the following objectives (in part): to articulate the definition of racism and prejudice; to identify concrete practices of individual and institutional racism in our society; to identify strategies for changing attitudes and behavior. This study guide is available through the office of the Board of Christian Education, but has rarely been used.

Another model, initiated by Rev. Neil Routh, was a series of six sessions on racial reconciliation in which members of Grace Moravian met with members of black churches in Mount Airy with Rev. Carlton Eversley, a Presbyterian minister in Winston-Salem, as facilitator. Members of Grace learned a great deal about the experience of black people in Mount Airy. One black participant said, "I've never had a chance to say these things

to white people before." She was a teacher with a master's degree and certified in administration, but had never been, and did not expect to be, offered a position in administration. I think that the white participants shared Brother Couch's experience of learning to listen to African-Americans. This model responds to Brother Weber's concern that "a lot of white people . . . have no idea as to what life is like for African-Americans." As part of this program, participants interviewed people in the community to gain a perspective on the black experience, over the years, in Mount Airy in regard to health, education, real estate, etc. It was revealing for all. For example, there are minority people who are suspicious of white doctors, based on past experience. They will go to a pharmacist and ask for "something for a headache" without being treated for the cause.

In regard to models, I would also highlight the program, Study Circles in Race, mentioned by Brother Couch.

➤ **Youth.** Brother Belfield stated: "I think we have to start with the children." White churches can invite minority children to Sunday school and Vacation Bible School. Youth groups from white and black churches can meet together and, especially, do joint projects such as community service, Habitat for Humanity, and mission trips. In his book, *Race Matters*, Cornell West recommends youth leadership training. Chambers of Commerce and the YMCA have developed such programs. Our churches could use these as models or direct our youth into them.

➤ **Action.** Brother Couch noted the importance of having some action as the focus of group meetings. At times it is appropriate to talk about race, but at other times positive racial interaction results from

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."

Edward J. P. O'Connor, Ed.D., is Professor Emeritus at the University of Connecticut, a member of Grace Moravian Church, and Chair of the Southern Province Commission on Church and Society.

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