



# THE HINGE

*A Journal of Christian Thought  
for the Moravian Church*

**“Regarding the Interpretation of  
Resolution 6”**

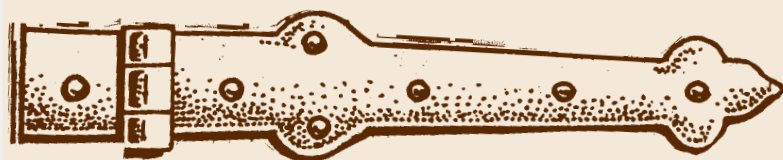
Glenn Hertzog

*Responses by*

*Jon Barnes, Kathy Barnes, Frank Crouch, Lorin Miller,  
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# *The Hinge*

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*The Hinge* is a forum for theological discussion in the Moravian Church. Views and opinions expressed in articles published in *The Hinge* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the official positions of the Moravian Church and its agencies. You are welcome to submit letters and articles for consideration for publication.

One of the early offices of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pa. was that of the Hinge: “The office of the Hinge requires that the brother who holds it look after everything and bring troublesome factors within the congregation into mutual accord without their first having to be taken up publicly in the congregation council.” September 1742, The Bethlehem Diary, vol. 1, tr. by Kenneth Hamilton, p. 80.

This idea from the Moravian past has been chosen to represent the character of this journal. *The Hinge* is intended also to be a mainspring in the life of the contemporary Moravian Church, causing us to move, think, and grow. Above all, it is to be an instrument for opening doors in our church.

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## Notes from the Editor

It is the mission of *The Hinge* to discuss issues that are controversial in the Moravian Church so that we may come to a better understanding mutually. When I was in seminary 20 years ago, I never expected that homosexuality would become *the* divisive issue of the 21st century, but it is evident that this issue will define the future of all American churches. The issues surrounding homosexuality, including ordination and gay unions, are tearing apart some of our sister denominations. Some congregations have declared themselves “open and affirming” or simply “sanctuaries” for gay persons while other congregations, in opposition, have signed on to various “Confessing Church” movements that define heterosexuality as an essential of the faith.

Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and UCC are dealing with this matter according to their own doctrinal and ecclesiastical traditions, but the basic arguments sound very familiar to Moravians. *The Hinge* first raised this issue more than a decade ago (1991, 1:4), and the arguments are basically the same now as then. There has been much discussion of the handful of biblical passages that address same-gender relationships and how these passages should be interpreted in the light of two thousand years of church practice. There has also been much debate over what modern scientific research tells us about human sexuality. Needless to say, there has been little consensus despite synod resolutions in the North and South. The theological and ecclesial discussion has been complicated by secular politics, too.

The debate in the Moravian Church made a quantum leap in intensity in 2002 when the Northern Provincial Synod passed a resolution that is explicitly supportive of homosexual persons in our church. In this issue of *The Hinge*, Glenn Hertzog gives an interpretation of Resolution 6 and its role in the church. That resolution passed, though, without a clear consensus in the synod or the church on what this means. Now we Moravians are experiencing divisions similar to those in other churches.

It is not the role of *The Hinge* to advocate for any position in church debates, other than for the need for open and honest intellectual dialog about our faith and practice. It is therefore unfortunate that this particular edition of *The Hinge* is unbalanced in its presentation. More than a dozen people, liberal and conservative, were asked to write responses to the lead article by Glenn Hertzog. Those who accepted the invitation were generally supportive of greater inclusion of homosexuals in the church. Many of those opposed to Resolution 6 told me privately that they did not feel they could put their views in print. Clergy indicated that they felt that their careers might be affected if they spoke against a synod resolution. It saddens me greatly that anyone in our community feels that they cannot speak openly and honestly on sensitive issues. I wonder what it means to move towards greater openness and affirmation in matters of sexuality if it means less openness to reasonable discussion of matters of faith. I am very grateful to each of the brothers and sisters who had the courage to present their views on this volatile issue, and I hope that we Moravians can recover our ability to reason together in faith and love.

# Regarding the Interpretation of “Resolution 6”

Glenn Hertzog

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On June seventeenth and eighteenth, 2002, during its fifteenth and sixteenth plenary sessions, the Provincial Synod of the Northern Province of the Moravian Church adopted the Second Partial Report of The Committee on Church and Society, regarding *Recognition of Homosexual Members of the Moravian Church Northern Province*. The focal point of a great deal of discussion, both within and beyond the Northern Province, is found in the resolution identified as *RESOLVED: (6) Homosexual individuals shall be supported and affirmed by being allowed to celebrate their lives as individuals and/or couples completely within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all persons.*

Continuing a series of resolutions that reaches back to Northern Province Synod of 1974, it became the Northern Province’s latest attempt to legislatively create an environment wherein church members and friends who identify themselves as same-sex oriented might feel less isolated or segregated within the province’s Moravian Christian community. It will remain the last attempt for some time, because our Unity Synod met in August of the same year and was invited to review the Northern Province action. Unity Synod addressed the issue, determined that the question of homosexuals in the church is a biblical, theological, pastoral issue that “*does not rise to the doctrinal equivalent of the New Testament*

*confession, ‘Jesus is Lord.’”* Unity Synod then declared a moratorium on additional pertinent legislation pending further study of the broader subject of homosexuality by the Unity Board.

It is with a clear understanding of the need (and various Synod directives) for continuing dialogue that I offer these personal comments. My contribution of this article to *The Hinge* is a matter of some concern for the Provincial Elders’ Conference, North, where we have discussed the advisability of reviving some of the strong emotional reactions Resolution 6 generated. I am grateful for their concern, but I believe that, given an issue over which church opinion is clearly divided and unlikely to change, the passing of time may enable us to bring our anger under control, affirm the commonality of purpose that binds us together, and permit us to understand and appreciate some of the pain that fuels the anger. Based upon that belief, and with a reminder that the issue being discussed here is Resolution 6, not any larger issue, let’s move along.

There are several *Lebenslauf* events that stand out in my memory as being formative to my ministry as a Provincial Elder in the Northern Province. I share some of them here because they might help you understand my perspective and some of my attitudes. One of those events occurred in 1969, as I am best able to recall. I completed ten years in the US Navy Submarine Service, and my wife, children and I returned

home to the Schoeneck Moravian congregation, near Nazareth, Pennsylvania. I was elected to serve the congregation as an elder, and during the early part of my term several items were stolen from our sanctuary. We were faced with making a decision about locking the church doors. We could not determine if, in our two hundred years as a congregation, the doors had ever been locked; and we were deeply concerned about changing the “open door” tradition. I can remember several sleepless nights, and several other nights filled with vivid dreams about sacrifices people had made, some giving up their freedom and others giving up their lives to *open* doors for worship. My anxiety was heightened by my awareness that people in other places were being denied the freedom of public Christian worship at that very time.

It was a difficult and emotional debate; practicality finally dictated that the doors should be locked, and opened only for “authorized” access. It was a bitter lesson for me in the changing of times, because I was fortunate to grow up with a sense of personal security that was far more open. I remember that when I was a child we left our house one day and I asked my mother if she was going to lock the door. She replied, “No, it looks like it might rain and someone may need to get inside quickly.” When the door *did* get locked, the key was placed beneath the welcome mat immediately in front of it. In that place, at that time, thoughtfulness and our sense of personal security had not yet fallen victim to doubt and fear.

While some Moravians may see the primary function of their provincial elders as being guardians of church doctrine and policy, we are more inclined to see ourselves as facilitators

and implementers of church vision. If I am, of necessity, placed into a role of doorkeeper, I will look for reasons to keep the door open before I accept a reason to close it. I am certain that to do otherwise would limit my effectiveness as a leader and may obscure some opportunities for evangelism. I cannot think of an adequate reason for trying to deny any of God’s children the blessings I enjoy. And I define an *adequate* reason as one that might suffice on *my* day of judgment.

In May, Pastor Rick Beck organized an inter-faith dialog opportunity at Schoeneck Church. A Muslim layman, Dr. Mohamed Bugaighis; a Jew, Rabbi Jonathan Gerard; and Rev. Dr. Gordon Sommers, a former Moravian provincial president formed the panel. Surrounding communities were invited to attend the event. Each panelist spoke for a few minutes about the basic elements of his belief and worship tradition, and then the audience, comprised of members of a variety of Christian denominations, was invited to ask questions.

It was my impression that all three speakers affirmed the existence of one God, and, even though our belief systems and traditions are very different from each other, we all worship that same God. Feeling secure in that perception, I was happily learning something about the history, beliefs and worship traditions of Muslims and Jews, when two men rose, in turn, and moved to the floor microphone. Each proceeded to verbally assail Dr. Bugaighis and Rabbi Gerard, sometimes very personally, about their beliefs. Both men invoked scripture by chapter and verse. I must admit that the scripture was familiar,

but their unilateral arguments were carefully scripted and were delivered so rapidly that I was unable to follow, much less analyze their logic. The monologs degenerated into name-calling and the use of harsh, abusive language, until the moderator stepped in to curtail the embarrassing tirades. Having said what they came to say, both men left before the event concluded.

My purpose for describing the event is to say that, at the end of the evening, despite vigorous “righteous” condemnation of their “erroneous ways”, neither the Muslim, nor the Jew was converted to Christianity. My conviction that introduction and/or conversion to Christianity should be by *invitation* was reinforced, and I renewed my determination to make my attempts at evangelism be invitations to walk beside me and share the blessings I enjoy.

And I pause to wonder, if this principle is valid, can it not also work *within* the Christian community? I encourage you, if you have not already done so, to read the booklet *Resolution 6 An Interpretation of Moravian Church Northern Province and Unity Synod Actions Regarding Homosexuality*, prepared by the Provincial Elders’ Conference, Northern Province, and dated January 4, 2003.

I have found it helpful to my understanding of “Resolution 6” to see it as containing two distinct statements, one addressed to the homosexual individual, and another to everyone else. Paraphrasing Resolution 6, to the homosexual person it says, “You shall be supported and affirmed by being allowed to celebrate your life as an individual and/or as part

of a couple within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all persons.” To everyone else it says, “You shall support and affirm a homosexual individual by allowing him/her to celebrate his/her life as an individual and/or as part of a couple within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all.”

A great deal of discussion and controversy has taken place around the use of the word “celebrate” in the resolution. Some people have objected to the erroneous perception that they have been directed to celebrate a form of sexual expression which they cannot support. That particular controversy is unfortunate and unnecessary, in that it arises from misreading the resolution. Referring to my two-statement understanding above, I maintain that the homosexual individual is told, “You shall **be ... allowed** to celebrate **your** life ...” To everyone else it says, “You shall **allow** him/her to celebrate...”

In this resolution no person is directed to celebrate the life of another, and the Northern Province does not declare that it celebrates *anything*. In adopting Resolution 6, the Moravian Church, Northern Province recognized and reinforced the basic human right of a homosexual child of God in the Northern Province to celebrate his, or her own life. This is a freedom that is frequently, if not typically denied a homosexual member of the Moravian Church. But, it is one that everyone else takes for granted.

I must admit that my attempt to clarify the use of the word “celebrate” in Resolution 6 is done with some sense of hopelessness. It appears that misstating and/or misinterpreting

the intended message of Resolution 6 may result from emotional stimulus as much as from the absence of accurate information. As recently as the date of publication of the January/February (2004) edition of *The Moravian* magazine, in a letter to the editor a learned person wrote, “When the Northern Provincial Synod passed a memorial which said they, “*celebrated the homosexual lifestyle,*”...” This line is most likely misquoted from Resolution 6, the full text of which you have just read.

Please read the text again, and draw your own conclusion about Resolution 6 being the source of the “quotation” as it is seen in the published letter. I am disappointed that a well-meaning person has chosen to base an argument on misinformation, possibly from a third party’s emotional misinterpretation, rather than referring to, and quoting from the original document. Regrettably, my sense of disappointment extends to the editorial staff of *The Moravian* magazine, who chose to perpetuate error and propagate disinformation by publishing the poorly researched letter.

About a year and a half have passed since that Northern Province synod committee crafted its Second Partial Report, and I believe my sensitivity to political correctness has heightened during that short period of time. With a reminder that each synod resolution must pass rigorous testing to ensure that it can “stand on its own,” I ask you to read the resolution which follows Resolution 6 in the same partial report: RESOLVED: (10) *The church shall continue to enter into dialogue in a Christian manner with homosexual persons in order to understand their lives and their spiritual walk.*

Fully appreciating the rapidity with which most synod legislation must be drafted, and with no criticism intended, I draw our attention to the wording of Resolution 10: “The church shall ... dialogue ... with homosexual persons ...to understand their lives and their spiritual walk.” The wording can easily be misinterpreted to mean that a “we and they” relationship exists between the church, which would appear to include no homosexual persons, and another, “homosexual persons”. I can see that, despite the love and care with which the resolution was crafted, a homosexual Moravian might perceive it to say, “The Northern Province does not consider me to be part of the church, and wants to dialogue with me as an outsider.” I believe the most immediate need for pertinent conversation and understanding lies *within* our membership, and I encourage each of us to search out and adopt the most inclusive interpretation of all legislative language.

The “celebrate” discussion addresses one of the nine points in the PEC(N) booklet’s concluding Interpretive Summary. Another statement found there is: “*they do not make judgments about the homosexual sexual act. This interpretation remains a pastoral issue to be discerned through study of scripture and as the Holy Spirit guides us.*” The statement leads me to make two comments. First, the word *pastoral* is used here in its broadest sense, and I hope no one understands it to mean that judgments about specific non-abusive sexual acts should be sought from congregational pastors.

I have no formal training in the study of human sexuality, but my reading leads me to

believe it is an extremely complex equation. We do not provide specialized seminary training sufficient to prepare a pastor to offer objective counseling in support or condemnation of any specific, non-abusive sexual act; and I believe there is significant potential for advice, offered without benefit of appropriate training or guideline, to cause great harm. Second, I sincerely hope the Moravian Church never adopts as part of its mission listing, defining, or commenting upon the acceptability of individual sexual acts.

I will share another personal enlightenment that occurred as I recently prepared to write a stewardship sermon. While reviewing *The Parable of the Talents*, in Matthew 25:14-30, I discovered a lesson that had until then escaped my notice, even though I have read it often and listened to many sermons based upon the text. It speaks of a master entrusting servants with assets, and describes two entirely different ways the assets were managed by the servants. The first two servants worked hard and invested wisely, doubling the amounts entrusted to them, while the third buried his portion in the ground, producing a zero return on the master's investment. When he returned, the master received the reports of the two profitable servants with high praise and promise of promotion, while the third, the unprofitable servant was harshly reprimanded and severely punished.

The parable is frequently understood to be a simple comparison between "good" and "bad," with hard work and profit being "good," and laziness and lack of profit being "bad." The experience I have gained while working

with congregational debate and conflict, first as a member of the Eastern District Executive Board and then as a member of the Provincial Elders' Conference, North helped me to see an additional lesson in the parable. It may speak to us Moravians about our relationships with each other and how they affect our ability to carry out our ministry.

As I took a fresh look at the parable, a picture emerged of a wealthy man who made use of a planned absence as an opportunity to test three servants he was considering for promotion. To do that he entrusted them with various sums of money, then went away for a long time. The first two servants increased the master's investments, and were rewarded with praise and promotion. The third servant gave back the master's money, which he had kept hidden away, stating clearly that he knew the master to be a hard man. He accused the master of harvesting where he had not sown and gathering where he had not scattered seed, implying that the master did not deserve to profit from his ill-gotten wealth. Some of us might agree with the servant, believing that the dishonest businessman got just what he deserved. Some might see the servant's reasoning as being very righteous.

The master, however, became enraged, seemingly because the third servant brought him no profit. But I think there is more to it than that. The master was a wealthy man whose enterprise was probably not endangered by a loss of profit on the smallest of these three investments. His testing of the three servants had served its purpose; two were found to be worthy of promotion, and one was not. So, if he

didn't need the money, and his testing was successful, why did the master become so angry that he had the third servant stripped of money and influence and thrown outside to his certain demise?

I suggest that the master responded to something that was more important to him than his money. I think the master saw the servant's righteous accusations as *self-righteousness*, and a product of the servant's judgmental attitude. *The servant had presumed to judge*. Even worse, he believed himself to be "better" than his master. And the master's retribution was swift and decisive. The parable's message to *me* is clear ... only my Master may judge! Any "righteousness" that I might feel, if it is derived from my judgment of another person, is *self-righteousness*. And, if I let myself be judgmental and self-righteous, I risk my Master's great displeasure.

What might the importance of this kind of message be to us Moravians in our current circumstance? The membership of the Moravian Unity finds itself divided over a number of issues. In the Czech Republic, and to a lesser degree in North America, we are divided over differences between styles of worship. The Moravian church in North America is struggling to understand issues surrounding sexual orientation. In Africa we are in vigorous debate over the place of women in ordained ministry. All of these topics readily produce differing opinions and emotional responses. The topics are worth discussing, and we must talk to each other about them, but I believe we walk on dangerous ground when one group of us sees that another group will not change its collective mind to agree with ours, and we begin to judge the *people* who hold the opposing view.

This realization has had a profound effect on me. It causes me to take a critical look at the way I have approached my work, both in the Moravian Church and in private industry. Most notably, it has led me to see how dramatically our attitudes and responses affect the quantity and quality of our ministry as Moravian Christians. Our intolerance of each other has caused some members to stop coming to church activities (even worship services), some to withhold their tithes and offerings, and others to withdraw from membership altogether. These people include both laity and clergy. The resulting cost to the church is a reduction in our ministry. I concluded that portion of my stewardship sermon with the statement, "In a world as needy as ours, any decrease in ministry is inexcusable, probably sinful, and an outrageous example of bad stewardship!"

I am a US citizen, a husband, father and a veteran of US military service. I respect and live by the US Constitution, and admire the wisdom of the people who wrote it. Resolution 6 provides no civil right or liberty that I have not already put my mortal life on the line to serve and protect.

I am a Christian, a Moravian and a servant-leader in the Moravian Church. I trust fully in the ability of our synods to discern, interpret and implement the leading of the Holy Spirit. Resolution 6 provides no human right to God's children that I am not willing to put my eternal life on the line to serve and protect.

What should we do now? Some people who voted in favor of Resolution 6 did so because they believed it improved the status of a small isolated, segregated part of the Moravian Church.

Others voted for it because it did not push them beyond their personal comfort zones. Some people voted against the resolution because they believe that particular segment of the Moravian Church *should be* separated from the rest. And some voted against it because it *did* push them beyond their comfort zones.

Unity Synod has told us (wisely, I believe) that we are not yet ready to enact additional legislation. Perhaps the Holy Spirit wants us to *listen* for awhile. In the meantime, Resolution 6 stands strongly on its own. It passes that test.

I feel led to view it as literally as I can, let it be everything it says it is, and not make of it anything it is not. We can look to the PEC(N) interpretive booklet and its concluding summary to help guide us in that process.

Just how *essential* is Resolution 6? Will the subject of Resolution 6 come up when we stand before God to be judged? It could! But, I think God may judge us less on its content than on the way we treated each other while we discussed it.

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*Glenn Hertzog is a member of the PEC, Northern Province and a member of Schoeneck Moravian Church in Nazareth, Pennsylvania.*

SECOND PARTIAL REPORT  
COMMITTEE ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY

**RE: Recognition of Homosexual Members of the Moravian Church Northern Province**

Whereas, Scripture affirms the inclusion of all persons in the community of faith; including those once believed to be sexual outcasts, the unclean, and others as set forth in Isaiah 56:1-8; and

Whereas, Scripture affirms that all who hold the Sabbath and choose what is pleasing to God will be given within the household of faith; a name better than that of sons and daughters, and never be cut off from God as set forth in Isaiah 56:1-8; and

Whereas, God's house may truly be a house of prayer for all people; and

Whereas, The Holy Scripture illuminates the heart and guides the soul; providing in both Old Testament and New Testament examples of God's acceptance of the outcast and the inclusiveness of God's outreach, i.e., Ruth the proscribed Moabite — Deut. 23:3 — an ancestor of David; the inclusion of proscribed eunuchs — Lev. 21:18-20, Acts 8; Jesus' inclusion of tax collectors, lepers, foreigners, harlots, sinners, the Samaritan woman in John 4: 7-15; and

Whereas, The spiritual journey of homosexual Christians is a valid journey of faith, and the same journey of walking with the Lord as is the faith journey of all baptized believers; therefore be it

RESOLVED (5) The 2002 Synod of the Northern Province shall recognize that persons who are homosexual can be members of our church because they are children of God and seek to know God's grace which is freely given to all people who have faith in God; and be it further

RESOLVED (6) Homosexual individuals shall be supported and affirmed by being allowed to celebrate their lives as individuals and/or couples completely within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all persons; and be it further

RESOLVED (10) The church shall continue to enter into dialogue in a Christian manner with homosexual persons in order to understand their lives and their spiritual walk.

June 17, 2002

# Responses

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## Craig Troutman

I begin with an empathic nod toward the members of the PEC, North, who wondered about “the advisability of reviving some of the strong emotional reactions Resolution 6 generated.” Within the church today, is there a more divisive issue than homosexuality? From other experiences, I know that dialogue around this issue can generate a great deal of heat without producing much light. During the Provincial Synod of the Southern Province in 1995, I chaired the committee that discussed the question of homosexuality, and have not forgotten the strong emotional responses shared in that synod. In the end, our committee agreed that we disagreed, that “the interpretation of Scripture, theological sources, and scientific, psychological, and sociological data is *in dispute* (emphasis added) among Christians who are sincerely and conscientiously concerned with the question of homosexuality.”

Years later, the climate within our church (north and south) continues to be disputatious, so the concern of the PEC, North is understandable. Although there have been occasions when the church has chosen to speak, it should be noted that the church has largely chosen to keep silent on the subject of sexuality. The silence extends beyond issues related to homosexuality and stands in sharp contrast to the explicit sexual conversation heard within the dominant culture.

Given the church’s dis-ease with sexuality and Br. Hertzog’s observation that differing opinions regarding Resolution 6 have resulted in “a reduction in our ministry,” one sees wisdom in the church’s caution. Yet, the conversation continues.

Reflecting upon Br. Hertzog’s article, I agree that the conversation around homosexuality needs to occur, even as I wonder about the advisability of it. I serve a congregation that has never openly considered its relationship with gay members. In my own case, for many years, I hid the fact that my brother was gay. The silence around this issue harbors secrets about homosexuality. It is a silence that masks fears associated with bringing this issue out in the open. It is a silence nurtured by “what ifs.” *What if* people stop coming to worship? *What if* people withhold their tithes and offerings? *What if* people withdraw their membership altogether? Amid our fears, we wonder if this conversation needs to continue.

These days within the Moravian Church it takes courage to speak. Courageously, then, Br. Hertzog offers his words. Moving beyond fear and anxiety, he exemplifies leadership and inspired me to broach this subject with the Raleigh Moravian Church Board who, in the relative distance of the Southern Province, had never read Resolution #6. Before our meeting on February 23, I sent each Board member a copy of the resolution and asked

if they would be willing to devote thirty minutes of our monthly agenda to this topic.

After making this request, I gave each of them a veto regarding this discussion. In other words, if one person on the Board did not want this conversation to take place, it would not occur. I also assured them that this brief discussion would not lead to a decision on our part. The Unity Synod's moratorium on decision-making made this discussion easier for our Board to have and furthered my not-so-hidden agenda, which, simply put, was: could our Board discuss the issue of homosexuality with open hearts and minds?

It did not come as a surprise when every Board member agreed that we could have this conversation. In hindsight, it did surprise me that the silence around this issue was broken so easily. After reading the resolution, one member of the Board said about the resolution's content, "I thought this was understood. Hasn't the Moravian Church always believed this way?" There was, in fact, no one on the Board who objected to the idea of the inclusion of homosexuals in our community of faith. There were those, however, who wondered about the wisdom of our making this an issue. For example, one Board member expressed concern that no gay people were present as the Board discussed this issue. Another noted (as Hertzog did in his article) that the resolution suggests the existence of a "us and them" relationship between the church and homosexuals. "Is it implicit in this resolution that homosexuals have a second class status?"

There was some conversation about the cost of bringing this issue out in the open. "Isn't this a

non-essential?" one person asked. "To bring this issue out in the open would create a mess. There would be strong reaction within our church." Another offered the opinion that it is the church's role "to provide an opportunity for conversations like this to take place among those who feel the need for them." Another voiced concern about the troubling polarization around this issue. "I like being a member of a church that can talk about this issue but understand why there are those who are too afraid to engage in this kind of dialogue."

Too quickly, the thirty minute time limit passed. There was much more that could have been said, but I was pleased that the silence had been broken with thoughtful, non-anxious replies. Looking around the table, I was also proud to be associated with a congregation whose Moravian tradition acknowledges God's grace in the midst of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Our brief discussion left many questions unanswered — not the least of which being — "what outcome is this resolution supposed to produce?" For now, the outcome is yet to be revealed. But Grace abounds. One of the last comments offered during the Board's discussion was this: "Our identity is not defined by our sexual orientation. It comes from our relationship with God." After thirty minutes our conversation ended with a palpable sense of God's presence. In this time of seeking the Holy Spirit's leading, Moravians anticipate more times of conversation, praying for the day when clarity and unity will prevail. Until that day, I agree with Br. Hertzog that God may well judge us less on the content

of our conversation than on the way we spoke with and to one another after the silence was broken.

*Craig Troutman is pastor of the Raleigh Moravian Church in North Carolina.*

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## Lee Sprinkle

Public acceptance of homosexuality has ignited a debate that draws emotional responses from all sides. To understand the concern that many have over the perceived intent of Resolution 6 we must put that resolution in perspective based on existing documents which the 2002 committee and Northern Province synod delegates would be aware. Glenn Hertzog writes that those who voted against the resolution did so because of a misinterpretation of the term “celebrate.” I think there may have been other misinterpretations at work.

To understand what the word “celebrate” was intended to mean, it is helpful to review the original Second Partial Report, from which Resolution 6 was lifted. This would have been the information that was given to delegates at the 2002 Northern Synod. Resolutions 7 - 9 appeared in the “original” Second Partial report and followed Resolution 6.

*Resolution 7:* Within the household of faith, those homosexual persons who have chosen to live within the bounds of a committed relationship, be recognized as committed and covenant couples, in full standing with other

committed and covenanted relationships; and be it further

*Resolution 8:* The final paragraph of the Book of order, paragraph 202. (e) shall be amended to read: “Ordained ministers, while single, are called to a life of celibacy (sexual abstinence); those who have vowed with another to live in a committed life relationship are called to a life of sexual fidelity to their partner;” and

*Resolution 9:* The 2002 Synod of the Northern Province shall encourage “open and affirming” congregations, where homosexual persons may participate fully in the life of the church, where they would have equal opportunities to commit and covenant their relationships, and where their children may be baptized and raised in the Christian faith;

Glenn writes: “In this resolution [6] no person is directed to celebrate the life of another, and the Northern Province does not declare that it celebrates *anything*.” To those who interpreted the resolution as a directive for the church to “Celebrate the homosexual life style,” Glenn states his disappointment that people have chosen to base an argument on misinformation, possibly from a third party’s emotional misinterpretation, rather than referring to and quoting from the “original document.”

In response, the “original document” [The Second Partial Report ], that contained supporting resolutions 7-9, does not support Glenn’s interpretation that Resolution 6 was not a call to “celebrate the homosexual life style.” In fact, it was calling for the minister and church to participate in some of the most

important celebrations in a person's life. In order to agree with Glenn's ascribed definition of "celebrate," you would have to both disregard the supporting Resolutions 7-9 and acknowledge that the Resolution 6 statement is capable of being interpreted in more than one way.

Resolutions 7-9 were worded clearly enough to remove any ambiguity on Resolution 6. They clearly informed the church exactly what Resolution 6 would mean for the church to allow gays to "celebrate" their lives as individuals and couples. Churches were encouraged to affirm openly gay covenants performed by Moravian clergy and to baptize children born (artificially) to gays; all of which would be part of that meaning. Also, language in *The Book of Order* was to be adjusted to accommodate gay clergy and their partners.

The language was not ambiguous to those voting delegates who were aware of Resolutions 7-9 of the Second Partial Report, from which Resolution 6 was lifted. Synod was in the midst of a horrendous debate on Resolution 7 when a bishop asked for a halt to the bloodletting that was taking place. When the synod reconvened the next morning, Resolutions 7-9 were effectively pulled from consideration by the synod with a series of motions to "postpone debate indefinitely" on each of them. The Northern PEC was faced with the need to interpret Resolution 6 without using the language of Resolutions 7-9 because the synod had not approved Resolutions 7-9. The PEC has interpreted Resolution 6 in the spirit of what Resolutions 7-9 would have allowed. For now, Resolution 6 remains the placeholder for 7-9 in a future synod.

Was Resolution 6 born out of misinterpretation of God's Grace? It would seem clear that authors of Resolution 6 had taken license to call the church to now affirm that homosexuals expressing themselves homosexually is a thing worthy of celebrating. Not in 2000 years has the church ever said this because scripture itself does not say it.

The outcry from evangelicals who saw the clearly licentious nature of the complete Second Partial Report did succeed in having clarifying resolutions 7-9 stricken. The original language and intent of the word "celebrate" remained in Resolution 6 and continues to trouble those who have observed the language shift from the 1974 Synod statement asking for love for all people to a statement that comes dangerously close to dispensing with the call to holiness on the part of all who desire to follow Christ.

The church's role in evangelism is not simply to call people to faith in Christ. We're also to call them to grow in the "fullness of the stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13) by imitating and obeying him. There is a sugary sentimentalism in the Moravian Church that has replaced truth. When Glenn describes evangelism as inviting someone to walk alongside him, the question of where Glenn is headed is pertinent. Discipleship is the key component in evangelism, but without holiness, what is discipleship?

Dialogue on homosexuality today suggests that the church will not affirm what the Bible defines as sin in light of the hope provided by God's grace. Indeed, it is only by the grace of God that any person is saved from his sin. Salvation does not come by convincing ourselves that what

God declared to be sin can be transformed to virtue by legislative vote of synod.

As Bob Hoekstra, commenting on Jude, explains: “[Jude 4] warned of religious people who will misinterpret the Grace of God to license sin. He called all followers of Christ to engage in a zealous battle for the integrity of the word of God. *“I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith,”* Such contending is essential, because carnal religious people desire to alter grace, as they quietly operate within churches. *“For certain men have crept in unnoticed . . . ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.”* Their intended modifications involved turning grace into license. Grace is God’s means of forgiving our sins, as well as transforming the sinner that he might sin less and less. Grace is *not* God’s sanction by which we plan and excuse our personal indulgence.”<sup>1</sup>

Unity Synod and the Northern PEC statements may have attempted to circumvent the warning of Jude 4 by continuing to acknowledge an uncertainty about biblical instruction on homosexuality. Rather than affirming the biblical views on homosexuality, each simply offered a restatement of the reports and resolutions leading up to and including Resolution 6. The Northern PEC further distanced themselves from scriptural accountability by granting each congregation the freedom to interpret their own views and actions regarding homosexuality, a position some churches have already assumed.

Glenn writes, “Some people voted against the resolution because they believe that particular

segments of the Moravian Church *should be* separated from the rest. And some voted against it because it *did* push them beyond their comfort zones.” To me, this is arrogant and condescending toward those Moravians who voted a principled biblical position against homosexuality. To suggest that such people are segregationists or that they want to remain in a comfort zone does a real disservice to those who took a position of conscience based in the clear teachings of scripture and 2000 years of Christian history.

Glenn states, “Our intolerance of each other has caused some members to stop coming to church activities (even worship services), some to withhold their tithes and offerings, and others to withdraw from membership altogether.” We should also consider the possibility that some members may have dropped out or cut back on their participation and giving because they are disturbed that the Moravian Church seems to have a propensity to approve of sin. That’s not a matter of intolerance of persons, but of a desire to be faithful to God’s revelation.

It is not so much my intention to identify who misinterpreted the intent of Resolution 6 or what their motives may have been. I think it is far more important to realize from this that important statements and documents that relate to our faith and beliefs must avoid ambiguous and unclear statements that say one thing to one group and something else to another. Given the obvious concern that was evident at the 2002 Synod over the wording of Resolution 6, it would have been far more appropriate to have tabled it until the language could be written so that all

could vote on a document that clearly said the same thing to everyone.

A core group of leaders in the Southern Province are working to conclude a four-year visioning process with the objective of agreeing on a simple statement that answers the question: “Who are we and what do we believe?” If that statement does not clearly and simply affirm our belief in the authority of scripture and its message of salvation through Christ, then I fear this demonstrates the Moravian Church is moving toward apostasy and heresy, in which case believers must call the church to repentance.

Maybe with clear directives from future Synods, PECs will be charged with guarding doctrine and policies related to our faith and beliefs. Maybe pastors will be encouraged by Glenn and other leaders of our church to offer biblical instruction on life issues. Maybe Glenn could find one more blessing to share with all God’s children: the blessing that all Christians enjoy of being called to grow in the image of Christ, called to holiness and righteousness. (Eph 4:24).

*Lee Sprinkle is a member of Olivet Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, N.C. and is webmaster for [www.moravians.org](http://www.moravians.org).*

#### **(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> Bob Hoekstra, “A Warning Against Changing God’s Grace,” *Day By Day By Grace*. Blue Letter Bible. 19 Mar 2004. 26 Mar 2004 <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/daybyday/02/0219.html>>.

## **Lorin Miller**

As I read Brother Glenn Hertzog’s recollection of the events that prompted our Schoeneck congregation to lock its sanctuary doors, I remembered the regret we felt over that decision. It did not seem like anyone wanted to prevent someone from finding shelter in our sanctuary. That was in 1969, when I was in the eighth grade at Nazareth Junior High. The lasting impression that episode left upon me at that young age attests to the seriousness with which we treated that decision. Recalling that episode has also caused me to reflect on my own personal experiences while growing up in the Moravian Church at Schoeneck.

I doubt I will ever approach Glenn’s level of devotion and service to the Moravian Church, but our journeys at Schoeneck are somewhat similar. Even so, the paths we followed along the way were considerably different. I was only fourteen in 1969, but I had already experienced locked doors of a different sort as a young member of the congregation.

Since my earliest childhood memories, I have always known that I am gay. It is not something I chose, or something I learned. It has simply always been a fact of life for me. For those of you who still debate this topic, let me assert that homosexuality is an inherent characteristic of my existence that is manifested by my affinity with the same gender in exactly the same way that heterosexuality is manifested by an affinity with the opposite gender. Based on my experience, homosexuality is nothing more than one fundamental and natural trait, among many traits that combine to form my personality.

The locked doors that I experienced at Schoeneck resulted from the message that there was unquestionably no place in the church or in heaven for gay people like me. That is the message I received from our pastor who served during those formative years of my youth. As if that was not enough to squelch all hope, in those days there was no information readily available to learn about what I was experiencing as a young gay person. More than anything, I desired to know of other young people like me who had similar experiences. Instead, the only perspective I knew in my world and my church was one of complete isolation.

In spite of all that, I grew up nurturing a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ. By God's grace, this faith developed in me at a very early age. Thankfully so, because by the time I heard the claim that I would be locked outside heaven's door, I was simply not willing to believe it. Why would God choose to deny salvation to me, after all those years of being taught as a child that there is indeed a place for me in heaven? Those locked doors did not seem like much of a barrier then, since Jesus had already been walking by my side.

Many years have passed since those days. I stopped attending Schoeneck for a period of ten years or so, but my faith never subsided. I simply did not sense that I was fully welcome there. Eventually, a new pastor answered our congregation's call, and I was compelled to return. I have been worshipping and serving my Lord there ever since. In fact, if you want to have an idea of my renewed experience at Schoeneck, I

would direct you to the words of Resolution 6. Those words describe rather nicely how I have been living out my faith in our congregation for the last eighteen years. I am grateful that the Northern Provincial Synod has taken this step toward unlocking a door, legitimizing what I have already been experiencing from within our loving congregation.

Unfortunately, there are many more locked doors to be opened. Clearly, many Moravians are unhappy that such resolutions have been adopted. Many would like to keep these doors locked, preventing gay folks like me from participating in the Moravian Church, and denying God's grace from all gay Christians. For that reason, I want to thank Glenn for making a leap of faith by contributing his article. Because this issue of homosexuality is so divisive and controversial, the natural response to it does seem to be one of silence. This has been the response for as long as I can recall whenever a reasonable solution to this issue seems unlikely. Even now, the Unity Synod has responded in a like manner by issuing a moratorium on further action regarding homosexuality in the church. This tendency toward silence will always be the easiest and safest action to take.

I appreciate the way Glenn breaks down the words of Resolution 6 in order to define their meaning so precisely. Obviously such clarification has been necessary, given reactions such as the letter to the editor in *The Moravian* that Glenn cites in his article, as well as some others that I have seen. But I sadly share Glenn's sense of hopelessness in this attempt. Over many years of reading such responses, I have learned there

is often a lack of understanding when opposing points of view are expressed. More often, our real priority is to convince others of our own convictions, rather than gain any understanding of opposing convictions.

Glenn has also highlighted the differentiation between the church and its gay members that is alluded to in Resolution 10. He has pointed out a distinction which is at the heart of not just Moravian, but all gay folks' struggle to achieve equal standing with our fellow humans. It is important that everyone be aware of how hurtful these distinctions can be. Separations such as this only produce more locked doors.

What disturbs me about all of this is that we must delineate so carefully what our church's positions are to be on this issue. That we are forced to parse words as though we are hammering out some sort of legalistic contract completely baffles my concept of what a church should be about. We are not wordsmiths. Why must we spend our precious time and effort on "heretofores" and "whereases," while we ignore the real problem, which is that we continue to proclaim judgment upon and maintain discrimination toward select members of our church?

I believe many more articles on homosexuality in our church need to be written. More debate is the only hope for us to resolve our differences that are already so evident to everyone involved with this issue. I have spent a lifetime waiting for the Moravian Church to come to terms with who I am. Whenever progress stalls, I wonder to myself how much nearer will I be to my life's end, before I am fully accepted by my church?

Will I see this happen in my lifetime? When I encounter fellow Moravians who vow to keep gay folks forever locked outside church doors, I pray that God might bestow upon them the same grace that has opened doors for me.

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13: 34). Why do we as a church willingly overlook this commandment when responding to gay members of the church? Oh yes, we say we love our gay sisters and brothers. But if we truly embrace this commandment, there will be no alienation, no denial, no fearful attitudes, no differential treatment, and no locked doors. None of these things result out of love, yet they are prevalent in the lives of many gay Christians.

My faith in God and my love of Jesus have sustained and comforted me on my journey as a Moravian Christian. I have never once felt that being gay has conflicted with that relationship in any way. I have always sensed Jesus' unconditional love and acceptance for me. I pray that *everyone* in the Moravian Church might soon direct that same unconditional love to *all* their Moravian sisters and brothers, with *no* exceptions. I long for the day when people like me can enjoy full participation in all that our church has to offer, but I am saddened to think I may not live long enough to witness this for myself. Then I remember a place is reserved just for me in God's mansion, a place with open doors, and all the locked doors here on earth become meaningless to me. Whatever the Moravian Church eventually chooses to do about its locked doors, I'm running

out of time, so I can no longer entrust that those choices have any real bearing on my salvation. Ultimately, the Lord is my only arbiter.

*Lorin Miller is a member of Schoeneck Moravian Church in Nazareth, Pennsylvania.*

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## **Leslie A. Veach**

I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this edition of *The Hinge*, for this topic is one that is dear to my heart. At the same time, I find myself humbled and overwhelmed. After much prayer, internal discussion, notes and a written response the size of a doctoral dissertation, I have managed to pare down the content of my formal response to four issues addressed in Brother Hertzog's essay.

Brother Hertzog comments on one of his "Lebenslauf" events and how it addressed for him the issue of an open door policy within the church. I recently completed the Gemeinschaft I experience in which I took on the exciting and overwhelming task of writing my own Lebenslauf. A central issue for me has been the openness (or lack thereof) of Christians in expressing God's love to one another. Even more specific, I have had my own quest for spiritual understanding of God's will as it relates to human sexuality and sexual orientation.

After years of thought, study and prayer, I feel at peace in my interpretation of God's will in this matter. The fact that there is a need to "legislatively create an environment wherein church members

and friends who identify themselves as same-sex oriented might feel less isolated or segregated within the province's Moravian community" saddens me a great deal. As a life long Moravian, I have found comfort in believing that I belonged to a Christian tradition that valued all people and celebrated the diversity of its membership. To suggest otherwise would negate the part of our motto that rings most loudly in my heart, "In all things love."

The language of Resolution 6, does suggest to me an "us vs. them" understanding of the church's call to dialogue. Not only would I agree with Brother Hertzog that it may seem exclusive to the homosexual Moravians, but it may also be exclusive to the heterosexual Moravians who sympathize with their sexual-minority brothers and sisters.

I agree with Brother Hertzog's comments on the use of the word "pastoral" used in the PEC(N) Interpretive Summary. I have received formal training and study in human sexuality, sexual orientation, and the "coming out process", and I have presented nationally on the topic of "Spiritual Issues in Counseling the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Client." With this background, I applaud Hertzog's warning that attempts to counsel others without appropriate training could cause harm. However, I must also say that, based on national statistics, each pastor should expect that a small but significant number of her or his parishioners personally identify as gay or have a friend or loved one that does. For pastors and counselors alike, it is imperative that we make appropriate referrals when it is in our parishioner's/client's best interest.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, I found Brother Hertzog's remarks regarding his personal enlightenment regarding The Parable of the Talents very interesting. This demonstrates a concept I hold as essential in our journey together as Christians and as Moravians: openness to new understanding from the study of the Holy Scripture. Furthermore, my own struggle lies in judging others who claim "righteousness" in the judgment of others. In this I risk becoming a closed-minded liberal, too enlightened to need the Holy Spirit.

I love the Moravian Church. It is here that I feel called to grow as a person in relationship with Christ. However, in order for me to continue to grow in spirit, I must also feel safe. If my gay best friends do not feel safe in the Moravian Church, I do not feel safe. If the woman in the pew beside me who is struggling with her son's homosexuality, does not feel safe in the Moravian Church, I do not feel safe. It is my opinion that Resolution 6 provides a secure place for persons on multiple sides of the homosexuality debate. However, let us never cease listening for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Surely, *this* is an *essential*.

*Leslie A. Veach is a member of First Moravian Church in Greensboro, N.C.*

### **(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> For further reading on pastoral care for gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, I recommend James L. Empeur, S.J., *Spiritual Direction and the Gay Person* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1999).

## **Kathy Barnes**

I would like to thank Craig Atwood for inviting me to respond to this article, based on my personal experience within the Moravian Church and my own life rather than any formal theological education. I also appreciate Glenn Hertzog's willingness to continue open discussion about an issue which causes more anger and discord than my experience of the Moravian Church allows me to comprehend.

I grew up in the Moravian Church and have always experienced one overwhelming commonality throughout the Moravian faith - our belief that God is a God of Love. Because this was modeled throughout my life by parents, Sunday school teachers, ministers, and fellow Moravians, I too have been fortunate to grow up with a sense of security that God's grace is for all His children, including me. I have tried to teach this to my children, and I am eternally grateful for the love and support given to both Sarah and Jon by their Home Church extended family.

One example of this love and support has been experienced through the years by my children at Laurel Ridge Moravian Camp. From Home Church Day on the mountain, weekend family retreats, and their summer camping experiences to name a few, my children have grown in their faith and the knowledge that they are loved by a large extended family of Moravian brothers and sisters.

To my great sorrow, it was also at a summer camping experience at Laurel Ridge when my son revealed to his friends that he is gay that some of the youth and adults who had played important

roles in his faith journey, turned their backs on him. They belittled, taunted, and rejected him, and made his last experience of Sr. High Camp one of the most painful experiences of his life. As Jon said to me when he returned home, “How could they be my friends for all those years and suddenly change their minds just because of my sexual orientation? Do they not realize that I am still the same person?”

Is he not also a beloved child of God? No matter how my husband and I have attempted to model Christ’s unconditional love to our children, this experience proved to be a turning point in our son’s faith journey. After all, how can we call ourselves Christians, when what we model to others is anger, hatred, and bigotry toward any human being? Why would anyone *choose* to subject themselves to such humiliation, if sexual orientation is, as many ignorantly claim, a choice?

When I first read Resolution 6, I was aghast that the Moravian Church, whose very motto contains the mandate “In All Things, Love”, would find it necessary to categorize its members as Homosexual or Heterosexual and to state whom we will or will not support. Resolution 6 contains some language which, I believe, is consistent with the ideals of the Moravian faith; “Individuals shall be supported and affirmed by being allowed to celebrate their lives as individuals...completely within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all persons.”

*To All Persons!* Isn’t this exactly what we have always known about God? That He loves and celebrates each and every one of us as His own

child and calls us to love one another even as He has shown His love for us? Why then, do we think it is necessary, or even appropriate, to divide the human race into specific groups of people which we will choose to affirm or not affirm based on our own arbitrary judgment of who is worthy and who is not? If we begin categorizing members of Christ’s body as acceptable or unacceptable of our support and affirmation, where will the self righteous judgmental attitudes end?

This resolution, according to Br. Hertzog, continues “... a series of resolutions... (which) attempt to legislatively create an environment wherein church members and friends...might feel less isolated...within the...Moravian Christian Community.” I would suggest that the only way the Moravian Church will create this type of environment is when each member opens his or her heart to every one of God’s children with the same unconditional love and acceptance that Christ modeled throughout his ministry, not when Synod resolutions attempt to legislate what is in our hearts and our actions.

I share this experience in hopes that it will allow us to continue to open doors and lines of communication. It is only by being open to the value that each one of us brings to Christ’s body, that we will be able to live faithfully, fully, and in a way that is pleasing to the Father who made us all. We must move beyond our fear, for fear is the root of all anger and anger is what makes this issue such a divisive one. We must pray earnestly that God will open our eyes to see each of His children as our brothers and sisters, as His sons and daughters in whom He is well pleased.

As Harold Stassen once said, “Whoever kindles the flame of intolerance is lighting a fire underneath his own home.” It is my belief that if the Moravian Church continues to kindle the flames of intolerance for *any* of God’s children, we are lighting a fire underneath our own denomination and insuring that God’s love will never be known through us.

*Kathryn H. Barnes is a member of Home Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, N.C.*

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## **Jon Barnes**

Brother Glenn Hertzog describes the chasm in the Moravian church over the issue of homosexuality as part of an ongoing effort for intra-congregational dialogue on this issue in order that we may eventually find unity and strengthen the integrity of the *Unitas Fratrum* with a greater truth. Resolution 6 of the Provincial Synod of the Northern Province asserts that “individuals shall be...allowed to celebrate their lives as individuals...within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all persons.” As stated in this regard the resolution seems very basic; so why was this resolution the product of years of discussion? Why does this excerpt’s preceding term “Homosexual” delineate a group of individuals from such a self-evident principle of human kindness and dignity?

Concurrent with the change in times, is the change in the modern context to which we apply ‘God’s word.’ If God had truly intended the

scriptures to be applied in a *literal* sense, he also intended to stop the progression of time and with it the progression of humanity. Although Biblical scripture is considered to be the word of God, who is to say that God’s word is fixed and unchanging? God’s creation is constantly changing, so why should his word (as transcribed by his creation) be unchanging? Almost 2,000 years removed from the Bible’s inception, Moravians (as well as other Christians) today are dealing with the questions of a woman’s role in the church, homosexuality, and Christ as people’s sole salvation.

According to the Unity Synod, the question of homosexuality as an issue “does not rise to the doctrinal equivalent of the New Testament confession, ‘Jesus is Lord’.” Unity Synod is simply skirting the issue at hand, indeed, avoiding the potential for dialogue and learning, in fear of risking the unity of the Moravian Church. If the Synod deals solely with issues that rise to such a “doctrinal equivalent,” I should doubt the utility and value of the council to the modern Moravian community, a community which is beyond the questions dealt with at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

It is only through dialogue that knowledge shall be acquired. If we are content with an ancient and antiquated interpretation of scripture, then we have failed to utilize one of God’s greatest provisions: the measure of time. Times are constantly changing, as are the people living in them — our languages, culture, knowledge and our way of life. Moravians believe that ‘Jesus is Lord,’ but he was also a part of humankind. As such, it is the duty of the Synod to address the ever changing issues facing our Moravian

humankind with a mind opened, not closed by Christian values.

Br. Hertzog notes that only “the passing of time may enable us to bring our anger under control...” But why are we angry? Why does it anger you to think that the Moravian congregation I was raised in would support and affirm me as a child of God? Hertzog continues, “...and permit us to understand...the pain that fuels the anger.” What is this “pain” that he speaks of? Is it the pain of those persons so bound by a narrow mind, who, although they have two legs, cannot walk forward? Who is more ridden with pain: a man who finds it difficult to do what God has called us to do —love one another — and give up his feeble attempts to play God, or a man who lives in fear of living?

As part of the efforts for “further study,” perhaps we should look to our communicant brethren in the Lutheran church. The social statement of the ELCA asserts that we must “affirm therefore that earthly peace is built on the recognition of the unity and goodness of created existence, the oneness of humanity, and the dignity of every person. Peace is difference in unity. It requires both respect for the uniqueness of others — finite persons in particular communities — and acknowledgement of a common humanity.” Jesus Christ was a pacifist (“turn the other cheek”), so as Christians why should we too not be professors of peace, “finding difference in unity.”

*Jon Barnes is a freshman in college and member of Home Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, N.C.*

## Frank Crouch

Glenn's article models what he says. He calls for dialogue at the beginning of his essay and ends with the reminder that "God may judge us less on [Resolution 6's] content than on the way we treated each other while we discussed it." I believe he has touched on a key issue, not just in the U.S. but in the worldwide Moravian church. That is, how do we maintain unity in the midst of conflict?

Our unity, as stated in *The Ground of the Unity*, rests in our relationship with the Triune God and the faith, hope, and love of Christ to which we bear witness, both individually and as a Church. Unfortunately, our witness has been marred, as one or two issues have become litmus tests for a "true" life of faith. We battle important issues, but our fighting has consumed us so fully that we largely ignore our mission to serve a world that is loved by God. As Bishop Lane Sapp said at the Intersynodal Conference of the Southern Province in March, 2004, paraphrasing a song from the 60's, "they'll never know we are Christians by our love."

In the 2002 Northern Provincial Synod, the Church and Society Committee did more than simply produce a resolution. At our first session, more than twenty people met together for the first time, with the responsibility to discuss how Synod might address this question. We spent days building trust, identifying "what is at stake?" and forming a smaller unity within the Unity. The emphasis fell on both content and relationships. Eventually, two main "sides" each drafted a series of resolutions. The resolutions differed starkly at

key points. However, the committee discussed them without rancor, but rather with faith, hope, love, and respect.

As the time drew near to bring a report to Synod, we decided to present two reports — a "majority" and a "minority" report. Discussion had been so evenly divided, that it was not at all clear which one would stand as the "majority" report. We voted. By a small margin, the report containing Resolution 6 became the majority report that came to the Synod floor.

To my mind, as committee chair, this close committee vote, the Synod vote, and the ensuing conflicts reveal a fundamental flaw in the Synod decision-making process. A simple majority vote does not serve the interests of the Church on this issue, at this time. If we think that a simple majority "decides" the matter, we are deluding ourselves. However, a vote as close as this one indicates that the Province has no clear consensus. By tabling most of the resolutions in the "majority" report, Synod recognized the need for further discernment rather than a win-lose vote. That decision shifted discussion from the floor of Synod into the life of the Church. It now falls upon Church leaders to facilitate discernment throughout the Moravian community before the next time this matter comes to a Synod vote.

Glenn's essay offers important starting points for discernment: attending to how we treat each other; attending to the witness offered (for better or for worse) by how we treat each other; and, focusing on the mission of our Church. As individuals, our position(s) on homosexuality should not be *the* defining fact of our lives.

It should be seen as one element of our total witness. The same goes for our Church. If our overall witness is wrong, no amount of correctness with regard to homosexuality will make it right. At all levels of leadership and community life, we should resist the insistence by some that we define ourselves by one issue. Instead, we must be defined by the common mission to which we are called.

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Christ calls us not to be right, but to be joined by the love of Christ and by our love for one another.

*Frank Crouch is dean of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.*

## The Author Responds

If you have read this edition of *The Hinge* from its beginning, you probably recognize, as I do, that the responses are more important than the article. As Christian witnesses they stand strongly on their own, so I will limit my responses to some of what I have learned from them.

Lorin Miller told us about closed doors he found in his young life, and the pain his faith has helped him deal with. I was away during much of that time, and when I returned I was probably one of his closed doors. Homosexuality did not become relevant until our family experienced the AIDS-related illness and subsequent death of someone we knew well and loved dearly. My absence from Lorin's life is more poignant because Lorin's dad, John Miller, mentored and sustained me as a teenager attempting to deal with the untimely deaths of my father and three brothers. John's health is in decline, but I hope he reads my public apology for not being a more supportive presence in their lives.

A comment about Lorin: in a recent conversation, Lorin told me that he would leave the Moravian Church before he would cause her to be divided or otherwise harmed. It is my opinion, and my prayer, that Lorin and other people who feel such selfless love should NOT leave the Moravian Church, but stay with us and lend us their strength.

Leslie Veach described as saddening, the Northern Province's perceived need to legislatively combat the isolation and segregation of same-sex oriented Moravians. That discussion is elevated to a higher plane by her introduction of the word *safety*. I suspect that during synod we may have tended to tone-down what we said, so we spoke in terms of isolation and segregation. Leslie reminds us of a "real" world where isolation and segregation really mean discrimination, and where verbal abuse and the possibility of physical harm are facts of life. Thank you, Leslie.

Lee Sprinkle's comments suggest to me the presence of pain and suppressed anger, centered

on resolutions that were not adopted by Northern Province Synod. The idea that Resolution 6 is a “placeholder” for those resolutions is of great concern to many people. The shock of what might have happened and the fear of what may yet happen have erected barriers within the Moravian Church. I believe concerned persons should be encouraged by the fact that the same Holy Spirit that led synod to go where we have gone also led us to stop where we have stopped. Because of content, timing or sensitivity to delegates’ feelings, the Northern Province has been called to a time of listening, contemplation and discussion.

The seven-year intersynodal period of the Moravian Unity translates into a minimum of *eight* years between the adoption of Resolution 6 and debate on any additional pertinent legislation by a Northern Provincial Synod. We can expect the synod delegate roster to change significantly over that length of time. We should trust that those elected to represent the congregations will bring fresh resources to the process in 2010, and that the Holy Spirit will be their guide as they deliberate.

Dean Crouch has done exactly what I have learned to expect him to do. He looked at my carefully written, though somewhat myopic discussion, and challenged us to take a longer view. He looked at a win-or-lose synod ballot and saw a need for trust and consensus-building. He looked at paralyzing arguments about sexual orientation and concluded that we should not let ourselves be defined by a single issue. And he nailed us solidly with, “If our overall witness is wrong, no amount of correctness with regard to homosexuality will make it right.”

In his closing paragraph, Craig Troutman recites an “unanswered” question, “what outcome is this resolution supposed to produce?” He notes that the outcome is yet to be revealed, but grace abounds. So does modesty! Please go back and read what you have written, Craig. I believe your discussion with your board put into action the highest expectations of the people who drafted and adopted Resolution 6, and (probably) the people who participated in this *Hinge* presentation. The non-threatening way you approached a potentially hazardous subject can serve as a model for us all. I believe the sensitive and caring response of your board is a reflection of the sensitive and caring leadership you provide. Well done!

Brother Troutman also wrote about moving beyond fear and anxiety. I suggest that, in the preceding pages, you have met six people who have done so, and I believe there may be thousands of Moravians who are poised to join us. Time is an important factor in mustering strength to overcome fear and anxiety. I offer the thought that Unity Synod’s moratorium on new legislation gives us such an opportunity.

The responses from Jon Barnes and his mother, Kathy, arrived after I finished commenting on the first five. If I had read them, and the response from Leslie Veach, before writing my article, I might have approached the task from a different perspective, addressing issues of safety, rather than social justice or human rights. Reading these responses before writing the article is not as paradoxical as it seems. The stories of the Barnes family, and Leslie’s words about safety

could have been written without knowledge of, or reference to Resolution 6 (or my article), and the concerns they raise reach far beyond the scope of this edition's endeavor. Conversely, Resolution 6 speaks precisely and directly to what they have experienced.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a member of a close Christian community is that it affords opportunity, even encouragement, to think and act idealistically. I think it was in that spirit that Jon felt safe and secure enough to speak to his close Christian friends about his sexual orientation. Most of us can only imagine how devastated Jon must have been when his circle of safety attacked him in his vulnerability. The anger and disappointment that seem evident in their writing are results of the pain Jon and Kathy feel; and I suspect that a large portion of that pain comes from their sense of being betrayed by people whose ideals they trusted.

Addressing Resolution 6, Kathy wrote, "...I was aghast that the Moravian Church ... would find it necessary to categorize its members ...

and to state whom we will or will not support." I ask the reader to see that Resolution 6 did not create the homosexual "category," or the isolation and segregation it embodies. It is, rather, a public admission by a synod of the Northern Province that such prejudicial, discriminatory division *does exist*, and it offers an implied declaration that hate-filled actions like those perpetrated against Jon ("... turned their backs on him. They belittled, taunted and rejected him...") are *wrong* and have no place in our community of faith. In an ideal world there might be no need for rules, but in this world rules are useful and can be effective (at least among those who are idealistic enough to abide by them). I am haunted by the thought that, if a Moravian "rule" like Resolution 6 had been in place, one of Jon's friends might have been encouraged by it to step up and say, "Stop! We have a rule that says we Moravians don't treat people this way."

Resolution 6 is an indication of how far we have come, and Jon's experience is an indication of how far we have yet to go.

## Book Review

Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978, reprint 2002).

Before he left his position as Director of the Board of World Mission, Hampton Morgan, Jr. was kind enough to send me a copy of a book that he said had transformed and informed his understanding of missions: Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*. Though the book is now 25 years old, I thought it would be good to review it for *The Hinge* because it does offer such an intriguing perspective on Christian missions, and is particularly timely since the BWM is engaged in a process of examining our missiology for the coming century.

Vincent Donovan is a Roman Catholic priest who pioneered mission work among the Masai in Tanzania in the 1960s, but many of the discoveries he made in missiology actually recall Zinzendorf's vision of missions from the 1730s and 40s. Donovan rejected the century-old practice of Catholic missions which focused on building mission compounds: hospitals, schools, churches, parish houses, aid societies, and political liaisons. He came to the conclusion that such an approach was culturally disruptive, expensive, and ineffective. It made the people dependent on Westerners, and it connected the reception of the gospel to the giving of gifts. Missionaries took children out of their homes and villages, taught them to be Westerners, and sent them back as strangers to their families. The result was not more or better Christians in Africa but more human flotsam washing up in the growing urban slums.

Much of his critique is now old news, but what remains fresh and challenging is the approach he took instead. Claiming inspiration from St. Paul, who was an itinerant apostle who "was Jew to the Jew; Greek to the Greek," Donovan attempted to bring the gospel to the Masai with as little Western imposition as possible. "I was not trying to sell them the school system or Western medicine in order that one day they might accept Christianity. I was trying to convince them directly of the inherent value of Christianity." (p. 23)

Zinzendorf instructed the early Moravian missionaries that they should assume that all people know there is a God and that every people worship God. What they do not know is that their Creator is also their Savior. Donovan began his work with the Masai with a similar assumption, and he acknowledged at the beginning that he had as much to learn from the Masai as they had to learn from him. "I told them I believed that they knew about God long before we came, and that they were a devout and very pious people in the face of God. It was not our belief that God loved Christians more than them, nor that God had abandoned them or forgotten them until we came along." (p. 25) Before he could evangelize, he knew he had to learn and value the culture and the people themselves.

Like Moravian missionaries for ages, Donovan first learned their language with the help of an

interpreter. It was vitally important that the Masai develop their own religious vocabulary rather than have the missionary use inappropriate language. It was highly significant that they chose the word *orporor* for “church.” This was their word for the most fundamental unit of their society: the same age group. This was the social unit that gave identity and meaning to a person’s life. One change that the gospel brought to the concept of *orporor* was that the church became the only mixed-gender social unit in Masai culture. Holy Communion was the only time that men and women had ever eaten together. Had he imposed this, he would have destroyed their culture, but they chose this based on their understanding of God and Christ.

Donovan was a careful student of Masai religion and cultural rituals, and he encouraged the Masai to incorporate their traditional observances in their Christian *orporor*. “I had no right to disrupt this body of customs, of traditions. It was the way of salvation for these people, their way to God. ... An evangelist, a missionary, must respect the culture of a people, not destroy it. The incarnation of the gospel, the flesh and blood which must grow on the gospel is up to the people of a culture.” In contrast to most Western missionaries, Donovan left the moral system of the Masai largely intact and left them to adjust according to their understanding of the gospel. Part of the essential message of the gospel that he handed over to the Masai was the understanding that “there is only one God who loves us no matter how good or how evil we are, the God you have worshiped without really knowing

him, the truly unknown God — the High God.” (p. 44)

Obviously, Donovan was not following the script of Western theology and doctrine in his approach to the Masai. Like Paul and the first missionaries, he brought the people the story of Christ without benefit of the Bible. Scripture could come later. He brought the people the story of Christ without delving into the vexing mysteries of the Trinity or discussions of the relationship of law and gospel. He first tried to convince the people of the need for salvation based on the story of Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. It did not go well. Finally he concluded, “After hearing their myths and stories, it seemed a little strange offering ours about a man and woman in the garden of Eden, and a fruit tree with forbidden fruit, as the definitive and final story about the origin of evil in the world, pretending our story were not a myth. ... I never told the story again.” (p. 57)

Father Donovan recognized that much of Catholic theology and ecclesiology, even the idea that the priesthood resides only in a select company of males, was culturally conditioned and could be dispensed with in practical terms. He also jettisoned one of the fundamental assumptions of Christian missions, that those outside of the church are perishing. “According to this assumption, we were to consider the Masai a lost people, and therefore had to convert as many of them as possible by converting them in great numbers. That would, of course, imply that all the Masai who died before we got there were lost. Perhaps if we lived in Europe or America and

knew of the Masai only theoretically, we might have been tempted to come to such an unhappy conclusion.” (p. 54)

One of the more intriguing sections in the book deals with helping the Masai with the Christian understanding of God. “They were a bit incredulous to learn that, for all practical purposes, we leave the female out of God, and we consider him only male, which is, of course, as patently wrong as considering God only female. God is neither male nor female, which is an animal classification, but certainly embodies the qualities which we like to believe exist in both. If the Masai wanted to refer to God as she as well as he, I could certainly find nothing theologically incorrect about the notion. Their idea seems more embracing and universal than ours — and not a whit less biblical.” (p. 42) This may help illuminate the fact that Zinzendorf appears to have embraced the idea of the motherhood of the Holy Spirit as a result of Moravian mission work among non-Western peoples.

Certainly there is much that is controversial in this little book, but there is much that is inspirational and challenging. I’m sure many would dismiss his recommendation as pure relativism, but Donovan raises many good points. Though it is a book on missions, many of his ideas may have relevance in our culture as well. When challenged by the Masai as to whether his “tribe” knows God, Donovan had to admit that we do not. “Americans have some kind of certainty that ‘almighty God’ will always bless their side in all their wars. Hitler never failed to call on the help of ‘*Gott, der Allmächtige*’ in all his speeches, in all his adventures.” (p. 45) Like

pagan peoples everywhere, Donovan says, we try to own God instead of being seized by the God who loves all people. We think we have found God and know God, but God is actually the lion who is hunting us.

As one who has spent much of his ministry on the fringes of the church: with atheists, agnostics, non-Christians, neo-pagans, and individualists of all stripes, I found this book refreshing. Much of my ministry has been with those who have rejected the church rather than Christ. They have rejected what they experienced in their congregations, what they hear from preachers on television, what they see on billboards and bumper-stickers, and what they have heard from those eager to save them. They are angry at Christianity, thinking they are angry at God. As we reap the whirlwind of our culture wars and competition, perhaps we need to think like Donovan in our ministry here as well as abroad. Rather than exporting our fruitless doctrinal disputes and individualism, we could rediscover the good news for us.

I would not advocate everything Donovan suggests, but many of his proposals could work in a Moravian context. The most “Moravian” section of the book was also the most moving to me. Donovan rediscovered that Christianity is not a bureaucratic institution; it is a community of the faithful. It is not a secret society of initiates, the *cognoscenti*, or the pure; it is a community of those who know that God has redeemed them. When it came time to baptize the first Masai in history, Donovan divided the village into those who would receive the water and those who would not, but “The old man, Ndangoya,

stopped me politely but firmly. ‘Padri, why are you trying to break us up and separate us? During this whole year that you have been teaching us, we have talked about these things when you were not here, at night around the fire. Yes, there have been lazy ones in this community. But they have been helped by those with much energy. There are stupid ones in the community, but they have been helped by those who are intelligent. Yes, there are ones with little faith in this village, but they have been helped by those with much faith. Would you turn out and drive off the lazy ones and the ones with little faith and the stupid ones? ... We have reached the step in our lives where we can say, “We believe”.’ *We believe*. Communal

faith.” (p. 92) Donovan learned that everyone was to be baptized or none would be baptized, just as Moravians long ago recognized that there is no Christianity without community.

During these days when all of the forces of the world work to divide us and set us against one another, this is an important reminder from Africa. There is much to ponder in this book, and Father Donovan himself would not expect us to follow his way as a script for all missions, but it would be good to read and discuss this surprising gem. Reading this, though, highlights the tragedy of how energetically Western mission organizations continue to carry our neuroses to the world instead of the good news.

— Craig D. Atwood

***Note from the Editor:***

Read a good theological book lately that everyone should read?

Write a review for *the Hinge*.

Send reviews, letters, and potential articles to Craig Atwood:

*zinzendorf2002@yahoo.com*.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Brother Atwood,

I just completed reading through the Spring 2004 issue and wanted to respond. I found Hans Motel's article most interesting. I too recognize the need for a vision. I found Sam Propsom's response equally interesting. I, too, have a concern that we Moravians along with many in the mainline church have dismissed evangelicals and charismatics. I believe we are missing out on a unique opportunity. Perhaps that is why we will remain a small church. My experiences of both these perspectives has been both positive and negative. Yet, I value what they have contributed to the rounding of my beliefs and understanding of the Gospel. I believe that we Moravians have missed out by focusing on the negative perspectives of these groups. We should endeavor to more closely examine them. They offer a richness to many as witnessed by churches who have embraced that perspective. We struggle and are barely surviving. I would like to encourage Moravians to allow their heart felt feelings of their love for Christ to freely flow. I recognize that to have someone during a church service shout out, "Praise the Lord!" might initially cause a great disturbance. But a simple affirmation of that feeling by the worship leader will keep it under control. At least that has been my experience. There are many times when I too want to shout out and raise my hands in a sense of jubilation and praise for the full measure of refreshment I receive from my Lord. Thank you for your article on Zinzendorf and Judaism. I have always been fascinated with Judaism. There were some very interesting perspectives in the article that I will be thinking about. I look forward to reading the next issue.

Peace,

Bill Pfeiffer

*Note from the Editor: Because of the controversial nature of Hinge 11.2, I am planning to leave extra room in the next issue for your letters. Please write in and join the discussion.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS for MORAVIANS

### **Rediscovering our Moravian Heritage** (an online Continuing Ed program)

**Sept. 9–October 7, 2004** • 7:00–9:00 p.m. • Thursdays (5 sessions) • Program Fee: \$35

A look at Moravian Church heritage, experience and wisdom. Presentations and dialogue will take place online using the software system, *ilinc*. All participants must be online at the scheduled class time. Included in the cost of the course is a CD of a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the Moravian Church. Participants will need internet connection (DSL or cable modem optimal), webcam, headset, CD ROM.

Session 1 Figuring Out God and Life and Self

Session 2 What Happens to Religion When God Is Personal

Session 3 Finding God in the Bible

Session 4 God's Amazing Life Resources

Session 5 Evangelism: A Moravian Perspective

Instructor: *Arthur Freeman*, bishop of the Moravian Church, retired professor of New Testament and Spiritual Formation at Moravian Theological Seminary.

For more information contact Judy Parker, MTS educational technologist at [jparker@moravian.edu](mailto:jparker@moravian.edu).

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### **The 2004 Moses Lectures in Moravian Studies**

“Faith, Hope and Love: The Moravian Theological Heritage”

In Winston-Salem, N.C.

Monday, **October 11, 2004** • 9:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m. • Archie K. Davis Center

In Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

Sunday, **November 7, 2004** • 2:00–6:00 p.m. • Sturgeon Bay Moravian Church

Presenter: *Craig D. Atwood*, Theological in Residence at Home Church and editor of *The Hinge*.

Register for either of these free events through the Moravian Seminary Office of Continuing Ed, Millie Roman-Buday 610-861-1519, [seminaryOCE@moravian.edu](mailto:seminaryOCE@moravian.edu)

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### **The 6th Bethlehem Conference on Moravian Music**

“Moravian Music Then And Now: In Celebration of the 250th Anniversary  
of the Bethlehem Trombone Choir”

**October 21-23, 2004** • Moravian College Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Co-sponsored by the Moravian College Department of Music and Center for Moravian Studies of

Moravian Theological Seminary through a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations

Inquires may be directed to: Dr. Hilde Binford, Moravian College, (610) 861-1691 [hbinford@moravian.edu](mailto:hbinford@moravian.edu)

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### **The Pennsylvania Historical Association's Annual Meeting**

“Moravians and Others in Colonial Pennsylvania”

**October 21-23, 2004** • Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

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