

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.

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## 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.