

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.

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