

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.

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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.”

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