

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