

Notes from the Editor

The 2002 Synod of the Southern Province encouraged each congregation to give careful study to our church's doctrinal statement, *The Ground of the Unity*. A study guide was prepared for use in both the Southern and Northern Provinces, and many congregations have had very fruitful discussions of *The Ground* since the synod. The editorial board of *The Hinge* began planning an issue dedicated to *The Ground of the Unity* immediately, but it took an unusually long time to bring this issue to press. We had a long discussion over whether to follow the usual *Hinge* format of a single lead article by a Moravian scholar followed by responses, or to try a different approach. We finally decided to use *The Ground of the Unity* itself as the "lead article" and invited a variety of people in the church to respond to it.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the authors who are sharing their thoughts in this issue of *The Hinge*. Arthur Freeman granted permission to reprint a study piece that he has used in his work at Central Moravian Church. It includes reflection questions to encourage personal theological exploration. Ed O'Connor describes the important role *The Ground* plays in his personal life and in shaping our church's social teachings. Doug Rights speaks to the importance of a doctrinal statement for a pastor. Hans-Beat Motel examines some of the theological principles of the Moravian Church in consideration of a revision of *The Ground*. Ted Wilde looks at one of the controversial issues in the church today from the perspective of *The Ground's* statement on Scripture. Readers are encouraged to respond to these provocative and evocative articles in the next issue of *The Hinge*. Please write to Craig Atwood at zinzendorf2002@yahoo.com.

More than a dozen people were asked to contribute their reflections on *The Ground* and its usefulness in the church. Some declined the offer immediately, but a number of people accepted. Sadly, after many months, some of those who agreed to write were unable to do so. Among them were brothers and sisters who were approached because they discuss Moravian theology on a particular website. Unfortunately they feel it is necessary to use assumed identities in that format, and each found it difficult to discuss publicly in *The Hinge* under their own names. I think that their reluctance is an indication of the anxiety that many Moravians of various theological perspectives are feeling these days. It is much easier to debate anonymously. It is also easier to attack another person's faith and convictions anonymously. I, for one, believe that such anonymous debate is inconsistent with the spirit of our Moravian Covenant. I also think it is vital that we recover our sense of personal integrity and communal trust in the church. Let us seek as well as speak the truth in love. Let us also own what we say and allow others their voices as well. Such honest and public debate is part of the mission of *The Hinge*.

In this issue we also have a sermon, book notes on recent publications by two Moravian scholars, and a protocol for ministers leaving a parish, which was recently approved by the bishops. I hope you find this issue stimulating and enlightening.

— Craig Atwood