

Notes from the Editor

In this issue of *The Hinge* we enter into a discussion that has occupied the hearts and minds of many Moravians for the past two decades. Worship provides an opportunity for the community of faith to come into the presence of God to sing praises, offer prayers, and be nourished for the daily struggle of living as faithful servants of Christ. It is sad that we Moravians got caught up in the fruitless “worship wars” of the late 20th century. Too often we became partisans instead of worshipers, and we divided congregations and even provinces. “Contemporary” versus “Traditional;” praise music versus liturgy; “builders” versus “boomers” versus “X-ers” versus “Millennials” defined our church lives instead of worship.

Matt Knapp and Bob Nickel reach beyond these divisions and assumptions to reclaim the heart of Moravian worship. They remind us that all worship is contemporary if it is truly worship of the living God. They also remind us that all worship is traditional if it is grounded in the ancient words of Scripture and the living witness of Christ through the ages. Most importantly, they remind us that we Moravians have wonderful spiritual resources to draw upon and to offer to the church at large.

I had the privilege and pleasure of worshipping in the Sturgeon Bay congregation in the autumn of 2004, and it was one of the most meaningful and moving worship services I have been part of. There was no doubt that it was Moravian worship from the liturgies to the hymns, but it was by no means musty and dull. The leaders and congregation alike were more enthusiastic and joyful than in any ‘praise service’ I’ve attended. There is no pulpit in the Sturgeon Bay sanctuary because the congregation has reclaimed the old Moravian practice of preaching from the liturgist’s table, which also serves as the communion table. Worship was interactive, and the sanctuary was filled with young people eager to sing, pray, and serve their Lord. We can learn a lot from the rejuvenation of that venerable Moravian congregation.

Our respondents are all Moravian pastors who have responded to the challenges of their contexts with different approaches to worship than that of Sturgeon Bay. There is much that we can learn from each other if we will listen and recognize what is good. My hope is that we will learn to celebrate the good things in contemporary Moravian worship and recover the joy of coming together to sing, pray, and learn. There are no magic formulas for worship. Marketing will never be a substitute for authenticity or integrity, especially in Christ’s church.

Perhaps the most neglected concept in our church today is sanctuary. Rather than using Sunday morning as a proxy battlefield for the cultural wars, we need to reclaim the biblical idea of holy places. Worship can create a sacred space, a safe zone where people of all ages can lay aside their burdens, confess their sins, and learn to love their God and their neighbors.

We bid a fond farewell and Godsend to Rev. David Fischler, former editor of *The Hinge*, who is now serving in another denomination. We are grateful for the contributions David made in *The Hinge*.