

various services. In fact, I still have most of these liturgies and use them often (I hope you don't mind Dave!).

Before these experiences with non-Moravian-hymnal-liturgies, I would have said that I was intensely apprehensive about writing my own. After the exposure he gave to MTS and our worship experiences, I feel much more at ease to share my talents with any given congregation. I believe that many of us, like Bob at Sturgeon Bay, have the gifts to share our words, and our prayers in liturgy. We must trust God to show

us how, allowing Him to give us courage to allow 'the Spirit to rush in!'

In conclusion, borrowing Matt and Bob's words, although tradition, planning and education must always serve to deepen our worship, it is always and ultimately about the Lord! We must always allow His presence to move through us. Regardless of what means of worship we use, traditional or contemporary, we must allow God's Spirit to rush in. "We need never to take for granted how good it is to be in worship" ...when we are worshipping the Lord!

The Rev. Ramona Routh is pastor of Moravia Moravian Church in Oak Ridge, North Carolina.

Robert Peek

Brother Craig Atwood's request for me to respond to the theme "styles of worship" and "attitudes toward them" reminds me of the Saturday newspaper's Religion section. There, hoping to appeal to the masses (albeit appealing to certain interest), worship events described as "traditional," "informal," or perhaps "contemporary" are listed. The issue(s) relating to how we worship in a particular church seems to always to be just under the surface. My response, rather than taking sides will be to share where Immanuel-New Eden Moravian Church is at the moment.

To understand where we are one must regress about six years to the time when I first became the pastor of two churches in Winston-Salem; Immanuel Moravian Church and New Eden Moravian Church. Beginning April 2000 I

shuttled between the two churches on Sunday and other times to lead worship

To set the stage and keep the focus for this effort it is important to describe as Sturgeon Bay did the parameters of a "Moravian" congregation. Immanuel Moravian Church could be described as a traditional Moravian church

- The organ was the primary worship instrument
- The *Moravian Book of Worship (MBW)* was the primary worship resource
- Liturgy was used in all worship services
- All of the traditional Moravian worship forms were observed.

Every thing was in its proper place. The offering plates and polity during worship were standardized. The pastor was expected to preach from behind the pulpit.

In contrast New Eden Moravian Church was more flexible in worship

- The piano was the primary worship instrument
- The *MBW* and a Gospel hymnal were the primary worship resources
- Liturgy was used, but not always
- All of the traditional Moravian worship forms were observed.

Expectations during worship at New Eden were more fluid. It was not so important that everything was done the same each Sunday as it was that the people were immersed in worship. If a youngster wanted to sing unexpectedly on a Sunday time was made for that to happen. I began to preach in front and later in the middle of the congregation and it was well received. This style was more engaging and there were fewer “sleepers” during my sermons.

One of my challenges beginning this ministry was to keep the congregation fed from past experiences. This meant most times feeding the sheep what they were use to consuming. And most Sunday orders of worship were two somewhat separate efforts, realizing that many hymns that one congregation found inviting were not the same for the other.

The challenge:

Early in 2002 the Immanuel congregation began thinking about merging with New Eden. There had been ample opportunities for the two congregations to get to know each other, and Immanuel’s worship attendance dwindled. The congregation was aging. Members expressed doubts as to whether or not the church could

remain viable. After looking at several alternatives, during a church council meeting, The Immanuel congregation decided to merge with New Eden. Within a short time New Eden also approved the merger.

The fun:

Soon after this decision to merge, people came to me from both the Immanuel and New Eden congregations to ask: “What will worship be like? These folks worship somewhat differently than we do. What will we do with the Immanuel organ? Can we combine our choirs?” My answers (thought out before hand) were quick. “We will sing the first hymn and have the liturgy form the *Moravian Book of Worship*. The following two hymns will be from the gospel hymnal. We will take the organ with us to the combined church.” This seemed to quiet anxieties. Most people were getting most of what they were use to experiencing.

The final solution:

I must confess that I took a wait and see attitude as to how this blended worship planning would be received. The bottom line is that it has worked well. At that time there were some comments about my preaching from the middle of the congregation rather than from behind the pulpit. One Sunday, an issue surrounding the location of my preaching came to a head. I tactfully began my sermon behind the pulpit. I told the congregation that there were some discussions from members of the church as to where they would like the preacher to be preaching. I asked those attending worship to close their eyes. Then I said, “Everyone who would like me to stand behind the pulpit please

raise your hands.” Then I asked “All those who would like me to preach from the middle of the congregation please raise your hands.” I counted the hands.

After walking down from the pulpit and standing in their midst, I remarked, “Open your eyes. The Holy Spirit has spoken.” From that time on I have been preaching from the front to the middle of the congregation. I haven’t heard any snoring and it seems to be engaging for the people and me.

There have been few conflicts. I select the hymns. If the choir knows the hymn then it stays on the order of worship. If not the choir director selects something else. The decision about hymns is not important. What is important is that our congregation comes together, worships from their hearts the living God, and comes to know Jesus as their Savior.

As a testimony to our worship we have reached out to other churches in our neighborhood inviting Antioch Baptist Church and Union Ridge UMC to join us at our Thanksgiving and

Christmas lovefeasts. The response has been great. A couple of years ago upon completion of our Thanksgiving lovefeast a member of the Baptist church asked me, “Can we come again at Christmas?” I assured him that everyone was always welcome. It is an affirming that Immanuel-New Eden is doing something right when the spirit of worship reaches out across denominational boundaries and makes us truly one.

Another Baptist this year remarked. We have you folks figured out. “Moravians are just silent Baptists,” acknowledging their (Baptist) propensity to say “Amen” during my preaching. With all this my conclusion(s) key on two important points. Worship should honor the living God, Jesus Christ and come from the heart. As I reminded a general during a funeral last year, after he identified himself as a Roman Catholic. I said, “You have the Pope and we have chicken pies and we all get to the same place through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen. Amen.

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