

creating a space that allows people to experience the fact that God is present and is speaking to each one of us as individuals and as a community of faith. If this is true, then it makes sense that different spaces help different people. Sometimes a traditional Moravian service of worship can function effectively for people; other people may need something a bit more contemporary or different in format to participate authentically in worship.

The reason I have appreciated our “blended” worship at Palmer is that we can do things a bit differently and still claim our Moravian heritage and educate people about Moravian theology in creative ways. I found the authors’ choice of words, “. . . *not hiding the fact that we are Moravians*” to be interesting. It seems to imply that there are others of us who *are* trying to hide this fact. Perhaps this is true, but I hope that all Moravians keep in mind that our congregational struggles largely depend on our specific context.

The Rev. Melissa Johnson is Director of Admissions for Moravian Theological Seminary.

John Wallace

As I write these words of reflection on Matthew and Bob’s piece for *The Hinge* on worship, I am grateful for *The Hinge’s* desire to explore the issue of worship. Let me offer my perspective. In Matt and Bob’s bravado style with a sincere blessing, I am struck first by their candor and clean lines of purpose: worship is an experience where tradition, execution/planning, and education under gird the core of celebrating

It is challenging enough to educate people about the Moravian faith in Palmer Township (or I would imagine in Sturgeon Bay) where the name is familiar. In the case of a new church in an area without other Moravian Churches, pastors need to handle this delicate situation creatively. Education about Moravian tradition needs to happen; however, it needs to happen in ways that draw new people into the Christian faith and fellowship.

I agree that effective worship planning is essential. People do expect excellence in worship — more importantly, I believe that God *deserves* excellence in our worship. I resonate with the authors’ statement, “. . . *careful planning once placed into God’s hands seems to set the Holy Spirit free in our worship.*” This is my experience, too. I feel strongly that everything we do in worship should be intentional. I also feel that we should plan just enough to allow for the incredible spontaneity of the Spirit.

our first love for the Lord. For worshiping the Lord, setting aside all of our quirky personal preferences and beliefs, and fully and faithfully standing in the awesome presence of the Lord is the goal of every worship leader and pastor.

Matthew and Bob raise some unifying points that clergy and worship leaders could learn, prepare and present to a congregation in the context of a worship setting. One could easily lead a year long program on learning about “what is a true worship experience.” This

“learning time” could focus on subjects like liturgy, prayer, scripture, hymnology, chorals and choir music. The sequence could expand a congregation’s knowledge base in a delightful, worshipful manner.

This learning time would not be delivered in an arrogant or pejorative manner but with a spirit of excitement, anticipation and love. The pastor could lead the congregation through a series of “worship chambers” not in Mr. Potter’s ask me style but in Lucy’s style of love for Narnia. Thank you for seeding such an idea for us to consider in our worship planning.

Matthew and Bob raise another point that often strains a congregation’s worship experience between “traditional Moravian” and “non-traditional Moravian” forms of worship. I agree with Matt that a good and “healthy tension” can coexist in a congregation. However, there are certain “tensions” that are not worth the struggle in every congregation, like what kind of coffee to make for the lovefeast, who should sing “Morning Star,” or what verses of songs are sung on Easter morning and in what order. As a worship leader, I have lost a few such “skirmishes” over tradition offered in a service. I believe using a blended style of worship helps us embrace and explore various ways to worship the Lord.

I often illustrate worship leadership as offering a prepared meal for the congregation to feast upon with the Lord. For example, if all one served on Sunday mornings were green bean bake, turkey breast, baked potatoes, rolls and pumpkin pie, every Sunday, Sunday after Sunday, at first we would embrace such a delightful and tasty meal. Nonetheless, over time one may grow tired of the same basic meal. Mixing up a wholesome

meal full of variety in hymns, chorals, prayers, liturgy (new and traditional) helps a congregation deepen its faith and expand its appreciation for worship.

Bishop Warren Sautebin once taught me, “Sunday morning worship is the most important time of your week because you can speak directly to the most of your flock. Enter the pulpit fully prepared.” I have worked with various talented musicians over the years, some outstanding performers and some marvelous worship leaders. Matt is fortunate to work closely with Bob but that may not be the case with some of *The Hinge’s* readership.

As we gather for worship each and every week, there are musicians who prepare for worship and those that prepare for their job. We have all worked with a few true worship leaders, organists or accompanist and also a few worship leaders that “hold a congregation hostage.” My simple advice is: unless you can play the organ, piano, lead guitar and sing on key, you may have to work through personal preferences and musical tastes with your worship team. Before the congregation is not the place or way to work through differences in musical tastes, worship styles or theological differences. Remember, we gather to worship the Lord Jesus and reach sincerely into the heart of the gathered parish family.

I would like to close with a simple story. I am reminded of wonderful worship leader in Donald Benedett who has sat on the organ bench of his home congregation for the past 68 years. He “took the bench” over from his mother at the age of 12 and has continued to provide inspiring, classical, reflective organ music for the

Lord all these years. Donald is not a published professional musician; however, what he does do, Saturday after Saturday, is drive nine miles out of town to his Berea Moravian church to prepare for worship. I asked him once why he drove out to the church and didn't just prepare for worship on his home piano. With a smile he said, "It just doesn't sound the same on the piano." True worship leaders like Donald live a life dedicated to their Lord, their church and their craft in their calling as worship leaders.

The Rev. John Wallace is the pastor of Waconia Moravian Church in Wisconsin.

Ramona Routh

I am honored to have been asked to be one of the respondents to Rev. Knapp and Mr. Nickel's article on worship. First, I must say; what a wonderfully written article, full of passion for God and for worship! Like it says: "Worship is not about what you get out of it, it's about our giving it all to Him!" Amen, brothers!

I would like to begin at the end. I would say that my background in worship and in all the liturgies began at a very young age. I was born and raised in the Moravian Church. I have to be totally honest: when I was young, I found the music and the liturgies very slow and ominous. During my teens, I would continue attending our church as well as attending Wednesday night and Sunday night services at various churches that my friends attended. The churches included Baptist, Presbyterian, First Assembly of God,

There are many such worship leaders like Donald in our denomination that devote countless hours of practice time to prepare us to honor the King. To those worship leaders of music, I, and many other pastors of this Moravian Christian experience, say thank you for serving the Lord and bringing glory to His name. Matthew and Bob, thank you for your insight and passion for worshipping our Lord.

and Methodist. That is where I gained a truer understanding of the unity of churches. I felt God in all of those churches as well as my own. I began to see that God wasn't calling us to be divided but united in our faith in Christ.

I also attended summer camp not only as a camper but also as a counselor. In fact, this was where I was called into ministry. It was during these years that I fell in love with more contemporary music. This music touched me to the core and helped my gain a better understanding of Christ and of God's love for us! At the time I felt that our worship missed that connection with me.

When I was in my twenties, my family moved to a neighboring town to care for my grandfather. Because I found that the Moravian Church in that town didn't meet my spiritual needs, I chose to join the church my grandfather and parents were attending. Although this church