

## Notes from the Editor

I have the privilege of teaching the history of theology at a divinity school in my hometown. If history teaches us anything, it is that the great movements of the church were the result of theological reflection. Whether we are talking the Apostle Paul's reflections on the meaning of the death of Jesus or Zinzendorf's reflections on the self-emptying of God, ideas have shaped and moved the church forward. Theologians like John Hus and Reinhold Niebuhr labored to reform the church because their critical reflection on Scripture and doctrine led them to a radical critique of the church's life. Churches send candidates for ministry to theological seminaries to study the faith and practice of the church, but there is no predicting how those students will in turn transform the church.

Many of the great thinkers of Christianity were pastors serving congregations. Whether it was Hildegard of Bingen advising her nuns, Schleiermacher serving as a hospital chaplain, or Rauschenbusch ministering to his flock in Hell's Kitchen, pastoral engagement informed theological reflection. The Word of God (Theo-Logos) is not merely a written word to be analyzed and hammered into a system; it is a living word that must be breathed from the pulpit and incarnated in the lives of Christians.

Our Moravian ancestors valued education, but they rejected the theological education of their day. They recognized that scholasticism had become a form of intellectual elitism and that the Inquisition was staffed with trained theologians. The Unity of the Brethren reclaimed the right and duty of ordinary believers to engage the Scriptures and the doctrine of the church. They brought theological education to the people and raised up pastors from the people.

Under Zinzendorf, the Moravians transformed theological study again. They made potters and carpenters missionaries and bishops. Most shocking, they taught theology to women as well as men. In 1807, the Moravians in America decided to open a theological seminary in the U.S. because it was too burdensome to send potential pastors to Germany to study at the seminary in Barby. That decision illustrates two important things: the importance of theological education in our church and the church's flexibility in making such education available. Moravians value education — and we are practical as well. In 1807 we adjusted to the reality of the times and built a new seminary. How can we deal with contemporary realities?

In March 2007, Moravian Theological Seminary held a symposium on theological education as part of its bicentennial celebration in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It was appropriately titled "Through 200 Years: At the Crossroad of Church and Seminary." In this issue of *The Hinge* we have selected three of the papers delivered at that symposium. In different ways, each addresses the importance of critical theological reflection and active Christian mission in the world. As always, we hope that these papers will stimulate discussion in the local church. Also in this issue is a special feature from a recent graduate of divinity school.