

Notes from the Editor

In this issue we take a look at one of the most important but overlooked aspects of religious life: the relationship of religion and violence. Most people in the world today have been affected at some level by violence connected to religious beliefs. Americans are most aware these days of Muslim Jihadists, but every inhabited continent experiences some type of religious violence. Christian history is filled with atrocities committed in the name of Jesus, and the potential for such violence remains high. Religion scholars, sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers have explored the connection between religion and violence, but there is no simple answer to the question of why religions, including those that teach love and respect for human dignity, can sometimes inspire individuals and groups to do acts of unspeakable horror.

Andrew Lumpkin, the author of our lead article, examined much of the contemporary research on religious violence in his Senior Project at the Divinity School of Wake Forest University. He graciously agreed to summarize his findings for readers of *The Hinge*. He offers several criteria that are indicators of a religious organization's tendency toward violence. This can serve as a mirror by which to examine our own preaching and teaching. Are we Moravians promoting peace in the world or could our words and attitudes potentially lead to violence?

Also in this issue we have several articles from around the Unity that appeared in our sister journal, *ITD: International Theological Dialog*, which is published in Germany. Most of the articles were translated from the German by Sister Linda Easter, who works at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. Linda grew up bilingual in the United States and wants to use her language skills for the good of the Moravian Church. We are grateful to her for her hard work.

The articles are written by some of the most significant leaders in the world-wide Moravian Church, and in different ways they address the twin themes of history and mission. What is there in our 550-year history that can be meaningful to the church today as it engages in a variety of missions globally? Some of the articles discuss forthrightly the question of whether one can even speak of a "Unity" amid the diversity of Moravian theology and practice around the world. Other articles raise equally provocative questions about the meaning of missions in today's world.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of *The Hinge* and that it will provoke your own thinking. Feel free to send letters for publication to atwoodcd@wfu.edu.