

also agree with Dr. Dunn that we need to do this work with courage and vision.

It takes great courage to speak publicly one's truth without blame or judgment. It takes a vision of hope to be a church that knows its identity and intentionally lives out of it. It takes tremendous integrity to be faithful in this work. Integrity to resist temptations to act from fear. Integrity to resist temptations to emulate our culture and society. Integrity to resist temptations to control and dominate. Integrity to resist our

## Galen Hahn

What I hear Truman saying is that a pathway of assent to correct beliefs in faith is not valid and that it may be the primary cause of the demise of the Moravian Church, North American style. I believe the Moravian Church is experiencing numerical decline and frustration in our efforts to reverse that decline. I feel, though, that the culprit is not so much to be found in our simple theology, often referred to by the motto, as it is to be found in our relationships, a reticence to relate adequately to others. We need to lay aside, I believe, our fears, pride, and deeper commitments to other things (like not stirring the waters) and be even more focused on our relationship to God. May we keep that which is essential in our understanding of the pathway to God and enter more fully into the present day work of the Spirit in our midst.

The essential for me is more a matter of relationship than one of correctly stated

need for security and stability. Integrity to listen deeply and remain open to God's spirit, God's grace in the ongoing act of creation, and an uncertain outcome.

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dogma. Worldly relationships are about control. The dream of our ancestors was to conquer every problem or challenge before us. When we understand things, we feel that we can bring them under our proper control. Much of that has happened during the last half of the twentieth century. Our knowledge has increased exponentially, and we are able to manage more and more of this world. But we have not yet brought God under our control. That is not because of our understandings; it is because of the nature of our relationship to God.

We Moravians control through our polity; we are episcopal and trace our authority back to that given to Peter by Jesus. We control through history and a constant reference to such; we were the first organized church of the Protestant Reformation. We control through economics in the world of Moraviandom; the small numbers of our North American expression happen to be in the wealthiest nations of the world, so we have more money to contribute and rationalize that the giver of the monies should call the shots. We control through theology by suggesting that which is simplest is best,

keeping us from having to work out in reality the implications of a deeper relationship to the Almighty. Such control of our interpretations, communications, and daily operations have severely limited us from a broader experience of Christ. Our North American expression seems to need to have the “upper hand.” This does not make for very honest or adequate engagement with other Moravian Provinces or groupings.

The same reticence to relate to others adequately throughout the Moravian expression of faith is seen also in our relationships with other Christian expressions of faith. Mutual engagement in theological discussions or social action endeavors or issues of national or world justice are given polite words of affirmation, maybe even an occasional dollar or two, but we back off quickly from their call for deeper commitments along the pathway with Christ. This reticence to relate more deeply in Christ can likewise be seen in our relationships to non-religious groupings in society as well. Take the Boy Scouts of America for example.

Coming out of the aims and ideals of scouting are at least five spiritual principles which have been a part of scouting from its beginnings: belief in God; showing reverence towards God; fulfillment of one’s religious duties; respect for the beliefs and practices of others; and service towards others. Here is a non-religious, educational, social grouping with basic spiritual commitments that provide a potential for work with youth and adults in the area of leadership development. For over ninety years scouting has built a web of leaders in North America that none can touch in

breadth and depth. One of the greatest needs in scouting is for religious leadership to connect to and fulfill its potential role in and through scouting leadership development. Yet time and again we turn our backs on this opportunity for ministry and mission. Initial words or gestures of welcome do not tend to lead to deeper levels of openness, cooperation, and the “working out” of relationships of mutuality and common endeavor.

Truman says, “we should face impending death with courage and vision.” I would agree. I believe that we need to face head-on our reticence to relate adequately to others inside and outside of the Moravian Church, North American style, as a relational difficulty and one for which we have not already “worked out” the answer in advance (thus giving us control of the discussion and the relationship). We need to face that unknown outcome with courage and vision.

Salvation in and through Christ is not a truth I wish to dismiss. It is an essential in relationship to God. It gives me courage and vision. There is a tendency today for many to think that nothing is ultimate; everything is relative. Indeed, some make this into a kind of dogma: “Nothing can be known of God. We simply have our own perspective.” I believe this leads only to self-centeredness and a life lacking in responsibility. To be in relationship we must take some responsibility, and if that relationship is spiritual it must include a commitment to or belief in something or Someone outside of ourselves. Out of all the possibilities I have considered in my

life, the pathway to God through Christ gives me hope and courage. It is, for me, a vision worth living responsibly for.

I cannot know the specifics of the future when I give myself over to the working of God's Holy Spirit. It could well be that the name Moravian might disappear from the annals of church history recordings. But the "Moravian expression" will always be a part of the Church of Jesus Christ because our theology is sound. If to die means to become even more fully a part of the Church of Jesus Christ, then let the dying begin. Let us give up our need to control

## Steve Nicholas

The safe, sane, same and sheltered society that I grew up in during the 1950s has long vanished. Leonard Sweet, Dean of Drew Theological School likens the cultural change through which we are living to a tidal wave. How shall we live and communicate the Christian message in a post-Christian age? That is the challenge for the Church.

Historically, the Church has always struggled with two dangers in its relation to the culture in which it existed. The first danger has been an accommodation to culture which surrenders the distinctiveness of the Christian message in a quest for relevance. The other danger is isolation from culture which cultivates a fortress mentality. We have abundant examples of both tendencies from church history. I believe the Church cannot ignore what is happening in culture. We must understand the culture,

and embrace a painful but nevertheless beautiful relationship in the midst of the work of God's Holy Spirit.

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engage the culture, and correct the culture. We will always need to change our methods and our paradigms, but not our basic message. In his article, Dr. Truman Dunn chooses the path of accommodation. He proposes not only to engage contemporary culture, but to surrender to it.

As I read the article, I sensed Dr. Dunn was being deliberately provocative in order to shock us out of our complacent pews and force us to wrestle with the central questions of our identity and mission in the post-modern world. I believe he is correct when he observes that the Moravian Church and its traditions are slowly dying, but he is profoundly wrong in his diagnosis of why this is happening and also in his prescription for a cure.

How does Dr. Dunn arrive at his conclusions? Through his own private conversations with the unchurched. He also finds support from books by observers of the religious scene such as Robert Wuthnow. Wuthnow's message is similar to that of