



# THE HINGE

*A Journal of Christian Thought  
for the Moravian Church*

Spring 2002

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# *The Hinge*

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*The Hinge* is a forum for discussion in the Moravian Church. Views and opinions expressed in articles published in *The Hinge* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the official positions of the Moravian Church and its agencies. You are welcome to submit letters and articles for consideration for publication.

One of the early offices of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pa. was that of the Hinge. “The office of the Hinge requires that the brother who holds it look after everything and bring troublesome factors within the congregation into mutual accord without their first having to be taken up publicly in the congregation council.” September 1742, The Bethlehem Diary, vol. 1, tr. by Kenneth Hamilton, p. 80.

This idea from the Moravian past has been chosen to represent the character of this journal. *The Hinge* is intended to be a mainspring in the life of the contemporary Moravian Church, causing us to move, think, and grow. It is especially sensitive to troublesome factors that may be an obstacle to our mutual accord. Above all, it is to be an instrument for opening doors in our church.

The hinge design was provided by Todd Tyson of Kernersville, N.C.

## Editorial

### Singing in Harmony rather than in Unison

For many of you, this is your first introduction to *The Hinge*, so allow me a moment to welcome you to this discussion forum. *The Hinge* has been in service for over ten years now, and it continues to raise provocative issues for the church to discuss. This is not an official publication of the Moravian Church, and the views expressed are not necessarily those of the editorial board, but we are very appreciative of those who love the Moravian Church enough to take the risk to publish their ideas on controversial subjects, even at the risk of losing their jobs.

This issue of *The Hinge* is a little different from any issue so far. Rather than having one (or two) lead articles followed by various responses, this issue features several short articles by a wide variety of authors. The editorial board asked the authors to write on the one issue or theme that the Moravian Church must address in the near future. It seemed particularly appropriate to do this just before synod and to make this issue available to all synod delegates in the north and south.

We did not know what to expect from our authors, other than passion and clarity of thought. Interestingly, most of the authors dealt with similar themes, although as you will see, from different areas of the theological spectrum. The persistent question (one often identified in this journal) is

our identity as Moravians and Christians. Some have called for greater theological inclusiveness and inquisitiveness; others ask whether it is time to refine the *Ground of the Unity*. Some have called for a new process of discernment that will invite God into the process of our self-discovery and renewal of mission. Many have noted that the Moravian commitment to community is being severely tested at the turn of a millennium, not just in America but in every province.

It is not my job as editor to add an eighth article to those provided here, but I would like to offer an insight that came to me while listening to the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus in my congregation on Easter Sunday. I think that we too often confuse unity and uniformity. We are so afraid that one of our pastors or other leaders will sing a wrong note that we insist on singing in unison. If someone's theology or liturgical practice or form of sharing the good news is not identical to what everyone else is doing, we condemn it; however, in singing harmony we must sing different notes appropriate to our own pitch. The beauty of the Messiah (both the oratorio and the Lord) is diminished if we do not sing the notes that are ours to sing.

Conversely, however, we cannot sing just any notes. Even modern "atonal" music is not a mere chaos of independent voices choosing whatever tunes and pitches they

desire. We live in a society that has made individual style a matter of near-religious faith so that we all tend to create the religion that best suits our tastes. Within a community, though, as within a choir, there are limits to our diversity and self-expression. It is important that we know how to sing our notes in harmony with our brothers and sisters rather than simply trying to overpower them with our volume and vehemence.

At the risk of pushing a metaphor too far, we need to remember also that the choir itself needs to sing different tunes for different occasions. This is one of the beauties of the church year that takes us not only through large portions of scripture and the life of Christ, but also takes us through grief and joy.

It is my fear that we are losing the ability and perhaps even the desire to sing in harmony. In fact, as I look at the provinces around the Unity and the lack of love displayed among those who disagree, I wonder if we are not in the midst of what our ancestors termed a "Sifting." Some of you are familiar with the famous "Sifting Period" of the 1740s, but most of us have misunderstood that phrase and our history. A Sifting was any time that the church was tempted to abandon its identity and mission. Usually a Sifting involved the temptation of some (including leaders) to establish a spirit-

ual elite within the church or to embrace sectarian and divisive doctrines (such as millennialism). A few in the church felt that their personal religious experience should be the norm for all of the brothers and sisters, even those who were far more mature in the faith and in the service of Christ. Those who felt they had a superior experience or who believed in an obscure teaching often tried to bend the church to their will, and failing that, attempted to establish separate fellowships of like-minded persons. Siftings could be very painful, and at times they threatened the existence of the church.

Are we being tested today to see if we are sincere in our love for Christ and one another? Are we being sifted, like our ancestors? Can we learn once again to sing in harmony, valuing the uniqueness of each voice while learning to sing together, or will we dissolve into separate bands of like-minded believers secure in our own sense of righteousness and hearing no other voice but our own?

#### **Editor's Note**

We had a strong desire to make this issue of *The Hinge* available to delegates at the Southern Province Synod in April; therefore the editing job was rushed. I apologize to the authors and the readers for any mistakes, omissions, and unapproved changes.

# Gerry Harris

## Interpreting the Present Time

*This is from a sermon that was preached for the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, 2001 (Aug. 13 lovefeast) based on the lesson Luke 12:49-56.*

The governing consideration in this text is the presence of Jesus as the crisis of the world. Crisis here does not mean emergency but that moment or occasion of truth and decision about life. It is the moment when one's response to Jesus will determine one's destiny. Such a moment was Jan Hus standing before the Council of Constance, boldly declaring what he understood to be the truth of the gospel, believing that ultimately the truth would conquer, and begging for a reasoned discussion of his writings. The decisions made in that moment created division, cost Hus his life, and determined the destiny of the church. Hus knew the baptism of which Jesus speaks in this text. The signing of the "Covenant for Christian Living" on May 12, 1727 by a group of refugees on the estate of Count Zinzendorf represents another such moment of decision that determined the destiny of our church.

What of the present moment? How do we interpret the present time? I think we, as Moravians, must answer for our time what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. I believe we live in a time of identity confusion. We are not sure who we are and therefore we become like whatever appears

to be the latest cure all. If we continue down this road of accommodation, we will end by looking like every other church trying to secure its place in the world. What we will lose in the process is our soul.

### I.

Times of confusion are unsettling. We need not be reactionary, however, allowing ourselves to be defined by our worst fears. We have reinvented ourselves a number of times by discerning what the present moment required of us. In the days following Hus' execution, it meant praying in secret in the woods since meeting publicly was forbidden and dangerous. In the days of Comenius it meant living the life of refugees, permanent exiles. In the 1700s it meant forming closed communities and embarking on enlightened mission work.

We have known long periods of confusion confounded by homelessness and persecution. In short, we have known much tougher times than we face in the present. It is to be expected that in times of confusion many and various voices will proclaim the way of the Lord. It is like the prophet Jeremiah writes of God: "Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw to do with wheat?" Many and various voices are attempting to define, or redefine, the

character of the Moravian Church. The task of the people of God in every generation is to discern the word of God from the dreams of false prophets.

Bill Leonard, Dean of Wake Forest University Divinity School and survivor of such a crisis in his own denomination, argues that churches need to practice intentional identity with integrity. *Intentional identity with integrity* strikes me as the proper prescription for the confusion of the present moment. I cannot speak for the church, only synod can do so, but I can ask some of the questions pertinent to intentional identity with integrity. My questions come from the core values that attracted me to this tradition at a time when I was a religious refugee.

## II.

The worship practices of the Moravian Church, especially its liturgies and most particularly what we now call General 1, bore witness to my spirit of a deeper spirit in corporate worship. I came to know the Moravian Church's worship as liturgical in nature, and the spirit of God breathed new life into my soul through those ancient prayers of the church. Do we still understand ourselves as a liturgical church that attempts to bear witness to the mystery and majesty of God? Or do we believe we must accommodate an entertainment-saturated culture until our worship looks and sounds like something from late night TV?

Do we still believe in the theology of God's grace that informs our traditional

understanding of infant baptism? Do we still believe, as both Comenius and Zinzendorf taught, that we should so raise our children that they forever and only know themselves to be sons and daughters of God? Or have we become so influenced by popular American religious culture that we must teach our children that they are sinners in the hands of an angry God who will send them to hell if they are not born again?

Do we still understand faith, as the early church did, to be principally and primarily, a relational term? Or have we given way to seeing faith as a set of propositions that require our intellectual assent? In the early days of our tradition, we believed that what was essential to salvation was God revealed to us as father, son and holy spirit and our response to God in faith, love and hope. What has become known as the eight essentials embodies doctrinal assertions most of us don't believe and which the Faith and Order Commission of the Moravian Church has shown to be an aberrant reading of our tradition.

Do we believe in the truth of the Old and New Testaments, or do we believe in the Old and New Testaments? Are we Christocentric or theocentric in our theology? Do we still adhere to a confessional form of church government or have we become congregationalists? Do we still believe as Zinzendorf taught that the Holy Spirit is present in all of creation including in all humanity, or do we think the

Holy Spirit is somehow our possession that we must take to those who are without? Do we still believe in the power of truth to conquer as Hus taught, knowing that we do not possess the truth but pursue it as our common good? Do we still believe that all things ought to be taught to all people from all points of view as Comenius taught, seeing this as the only possible path to peace?

Just as you don't have to become a Moravian to be a Christian, we don't have to become like everyone else to survive. Historically, spirituality has meant living deeply into a particular tradition until one

has a place to stand, a point of view, a sense of perspective. If we can no longer offer such a spirituality, we have lost our reason for being; we have traded our soul for a mess of porridge. The present time calls for an intentional, deep living into our tradition and a living out of this identity with integrity in a world hungry for something authentic. We can offer a genuine feast of spiritual riches, if we but remember who we are!

*Gerry Harris is pastor of Home Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, N.C.*

## Judy Knopf

### Vision Discernment in the Southern Province

As I have met with Moravians in the Southern Province, I have continually heard us name and claim one common core value: community. Community means different things to different people even though they claim the same word as a "value." This is very confusing for many of us, but, strange as it may seem, the concept that there can be unity in diversity is an underlying principle in this discernment process. Drawing upon the work of Thomas Bandy in Moving Off the Map (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), we can see four movements toward rediscovering our identity and claiming our mission in our current Vision Discernment Process. These are Core Values, Bedrock Beliefs, Motivating Vision, and Key Mission.

Taking the core value of "community" and following it through to a possible conclusion will hopefully assist us in a better understanding the discernment process.

By engaging in this process we hope (as we have many, many times before) to rediscover and uncover our identity as Moravian Christians in the Southern Province. By inviting people into small gatherings of pastors, DCE's, Youth Directors, Pastoral Assistants, Synod Delegates, and congregational members, every person has had the opportunity to participate in sharing who we are, what we believe, and in discerning our vision. During these small group gatherings we have discussed Core Values and Bedrock Beliefs, the first two movements. The results

of these meetings were compiled by the PEC and announced to our pastors and congregations. We hope that our congregations will engage in an active time of prayer, discussion, and discernment of these values and beliefs, and then share with us their visions for the Southern Province.

The visioning process in our congregations requires the creation of a "climate of active waiting" in which the fertile values and beliefs are brought into creative interaction with prayer, scripture stories, and also the stories and experiences of individuals. The interaction between a personal story with a biblical story helps us to reconnect with God's story. In the mystery of this connection, we have the opportunity to open ourselves to God and God's vision for us. These will assist the PEC and Synod in formulating a mission statement for the Southern Province. To me it is very exciting to think that any Moravian who chooses may offer input that could be vital to the life and work of our province in the first decade of a new century.

As our PEC has discussed rediscovering our identity and how we might speak the truth in love about our present values and beliefs, the members began to investigate the revitalization process of the Board of Evangelism and Homeland Missions. After some consideration, they chose to initiate BEHM's process for the whole Southern Province and provide an arena for honesty. In the words of Eric H. F. Law, "In the grace margin, we invite the outsiders and the

insiders to come together to share and listen to each other. In order to do that, we need to create an environment in which there is a symmetry of authentic revelation, compassionate listening, and reciprocal exchange of power." Inclusion (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), p. 97.

Although these small groups are only scratching the surface, they are providing useful and necessary information. This process offers us an opportunity to begin anew and hopefully build toward our future. Given our diversity in the South, we're not accustomed to gathering around a table together; however, I believe that God is calling us to establish mature friendships with our peers even in our diversity. Our image of God is skewed when we neglect honest relationships with our mature peers.

To understand this process a little better, let's look at Core Values. These are one-word preferences that are actually lived out in the daily lives of Moravians. These are the preferences that are consistently prioritized in the behavior of people. These choices reflect our basic foundation, our DNA, so to speak. They are not ideals that we strive to attain but the real preferences that we make over and over again. They reflect what we choose to be or do. Any member can name a core value, even a child.

During the process of naming and claiming our values and beliefs, we begin to rediscover how we are connected or disconnected with one another and God. For many of us, the value of "community"

sounds right because we understand it to mean "acceptance." A number of persons have expressed it this way, "I was accepted by this congregation and immediately felt at home." Others say that they were drawn to the rich traditions. Most who joined the Moravian Church as adults say they came searching for something that was missing in their own lives and found it here. Others speak of their own tenacity, saying that after many years they helped to create authentic community within one of our churches. A few have confessed that they wanted to be a part of a particular church and just stuck it out or fought it out until they were received into a particular group!

As our groups talked about the positive aspects that community offers, we imagined an open landscape with an empty lawn chair for each of us in the attributes of acceptance, fellowship, inclusiveness, affinity, kindredness as brothers and sisters in Christ, and commonality. In this view, we usually think of our beloved August 13th experience where everyone rallied around the "Brotherly Agreement" or to the colonial period, say around 1760, when everyone worked and lived together in "community," or to the delicious chicken pie suppers we now experience in our fellowship halls. However, as we dared to reveal the negative aspects of community, we found an illusion: an open pasture terraced like a maze denoting exclusiveness, legalism, nostalgia, and sameness.

In this view, we earnestly desire to maintain what was or is good, but somehow we confuse outsiders by the landscape we've designed. It is like the "ha-ha" on the Monticello Plantation, a small trench that originally separated the livestock from the manor house. If one were sitting on the patio of the manor house, one could look out over the landscape and see beautiful rolling natural pastureland with no boundaries visible. But if one were out in the pasture looking up to the manor house, one would see one trench after another in the terracing of the land. The "ha-ha" made it quite impossible for livestock to navigate a trench, much less vault onto the higher plane on the other side of it. Sometimes it's like this with a core value like community. What appears to be a home where everyone is welcome is really a citadel separated by barrier after barrier.

In the small group discussions we had the opportunity to listen to various viewpoints on a value or a belief. Pastors have had an opportunity to continue the Vision Discernment Process in their own congregations, encouraging their people to reflect on the common "core values" and "bedrock beliefs" of the province. The local pastor actually leads his or her people through the "Key Vision" movement of this process. It is imperative to study scripture, investigate church traditions, seek out other's opinions, observe what's going on in the culture around us, and pray for God to offer a vision of what God wants us to be and do in

the world today. This is a time when some will challenge us to maintain status quo while others will challenge us to move ahead. Some will challenge us with quotes from our visionary contemporaries like Loren Mead who says, "God is always calling us to be more than we have been."

This visioning process is a time of spiritual formation, not strategic planning. In the corporate world the visioning process is part of a larger planning process to increase productivity, open new markets, multiply more effective services, and improve performance. Biblical visions, however, are part of a larger spiritual life. Biblical visions shape the inner person and ones daily living, not just the programming of the church. The result of vision could certainly include new, effective missions, but these are the fruits of deeper spiritual growth. The vision from God will be the foundation on which we will build our goals and strategic plans.

As Michael Green says, "The church has, on the whole, not been very strong in following Jesus' example. We are much more comfortable when functioning inside the church building. We have become a club for the like-minded, rather than a light out there in the darkness or salt in among the meat that would otherwise go bad. We forget that the church exists for the community." *Evangelism for Amateurs* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), p. 93. This is another slant on the word "community," but in this view "community" refers to something larger than a church or congregation. This

resonates with one of the vision scriptures where Peter boldly begins a sermon at the threshold of Cornelius' house, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ -- he is Lord of all" (Acts 10.34-36).

In the willingness to trust the creative interaction between "core values," "bedrock beliefs," scripture, personal stories, cultural observations, and prayer, a greater truth emerges. There is a larger community out there than we perceive when we are busy planning! Is this truth God's truth? The discerning group under the pastor's leadership decides if this truth is one of consolation or desolation. Some would call this new understanding of the word "community" as a "value change." Even though the "core value" is the same value as before, it has new meaning that when re-uttered from our scriptures sounds like the right word for the right time. So the vision could come in this way. But only God knows how God will reveal the vision.

It came to Simon Peter on the rooftop of a friend's house one day in Acts 10. Did it literally fall out of the sky as the scripture says? Do you think Peter thought of a "Mission to the Gentiles" before? Could this have been gnawing issue within Peter for days, months, or even years? I encourage you to review Peter's life and traditions before and after his sermon in Acts 2. A

new understanding transformed a person like Peter. It can transform each of us: our groups, churches, and even our denomination through the power of God's spirit through Jesus Christ working in and through us. After an intentional period of acknowledging the mystery of how God speaks to us, we discover our unity in God as we wait, question, and listen. It is then that we can talk about vision. Each congregation has the opportunity to come together and talk about their deepest hopes, and dreams. When we place all of our hopes and dreams together, we begin to discover the vision that God has already planted deep within our hearts.

I am reminded of why I trusted this process in the first place. To quote Sarah S. Henrich, "For Christians, the way in which we form groups and manage hospitality

speaks among believers and to outsiders of the character of God." Inspire Bible Study Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997, p. 25). I envisioned "community" to be a diverse group of persons willingly sitting around the table, speaking the truth in love. This willingness, I believe, is a leadership skill of the twenty-first century. It's a new beginning for those of us who have experienced too much sameness! As a province we can challenge one another to commit time and energy to "actively wait" for God's vision as Habakkuk did (Hab. 2.1-3). We can step out boldly and trust God in this process, despite our imperfections, graced by God's affection for us.

*Judy Knopf is Coordinator of Congregational Renewal for the Southern Province.*

## **Cynthia Rader Geyer**

### **Why Do They Hate Us?**

In the fall of 2000 fifteen Moravian clergy gathered at the Unity Seminar in Suriname South America. The goal of this gathering was three fold. First, to deal with theological and church issues relevant for the worldwide Moravian Church. In this case we explored the effects of Globalization and Pluralization on the Moravian Church. Second, to get to know the life and work of one Unity Province. And third, to form a fellowship of younger brothers and sisters coming from

different cultural and regional background of the Moravian Church. During this experience I came to see that one of the greatest challenges facing the Church in the next ten years is the disparity of wealth between Christians in industrialized nations and their Sisters and Brothers in third world nations.

One of the more memorable experiences I had took place not long after I arrived. One

of the participants, who happened to be from a third world country, came to me and asked if we could talk. I looked forward to having a heart to heart and developing a deeper friendship with him. We found a quiet space in the courtyard and sat down. As we began to talk I could see my new friend was nervous. He took out a small note pad indicating he had written down some things that he didn't want to forget. The small note pad shook as he went through a laundry list of items, "We have become friends. You have showed me pictures of your husband, family, and home. I would like to show you pictures of my home and family, but I cannot because I do not have a camera. Would you be willing to give me the money to purchase a camera?" He then asked me to think about it and get back to him. I began to think about it. Do I give him the money, about \$50.00 US? On the one hand I felt sad that what I had hoped would be a heart to heart talk ended up being a request for money. On the other hand this conversation opened my eyes to the fact that on a deeper level, our relationship was shaped by the economic realities and inequities of our lives.

As part of the Seminar each provincial representative gave an overview of their province, their work, and their life. One of the prevailing questions was "How much do you get paid?" The answers ranged from North America - \$1,700 US Dollars per month to, several third world countries - *if we get paid* - \$25.00 US Dollars per month. I

remember being asked about my salary and trying to justify the monthly salary by sharing information about the general cost of living and the actual poverty line in the US. All my attempts at rationalization failed, I was one of the wealthy.

The truth of the matter is that the people of the United States are only 20 % of the world population, yet we use 80% of the world resources. A little closer to home, Moravians in North America debate whether or not to buy a second or third car, while many Moravians in South Africa and other third world countries don't have enough food to feed their children. The amount of money I spend on bottled water each month is equivalent to one-month salary for a Tanzanian Moravian Pastor. What is wrong with this picture?

North American Moravians number approximately 50,000 and control high amounts of wealth. This begs the question, how are we using this wealth? As a church are we modeling what we should be doing? What about tithing a percentage of all church income? Say the first 10%, above and beyond Benevolent Giving, for God's work in the world? Are we sharing the best of what we have with others around the world? How could someone in the third world not look skeptically at our faith when we have so much and are unwilling to share? The irony is that we are not doing a good job at sharing our wealth, but we are doing a very good job at sharing the desire for

wealth.

Suriname is known for its amazing hand carved cedar wood. On one of our trips through the city of Paramaribo we went to a wood carvers shop. We found the wood carver at home on a little back street location, a vacant lot that had been turned into a small cardboard village. There was no running water, very little to eat, and looks of despair everywhere. Yet, in two of the cardboard homes, there were television sets. The owners of these prized possessions had tapped into the cable of a neighboring home and plugged into the overhead electric wires. Members of the cardboard village gathered around the television sets to watch CNN, ESPN, and MTV, taking in all things North American; their desire to acquire wealth and material possessions was growing each minute. It's true. We have no problem sharing the desire for wealth and material possessions.

To sum up, here is the situation that we are creating. We are one small group of individuals who use the majority of the world's resources. We are one small group of individuals who control the majority of the wealth in the world. We are one small group of individuals creating a hunger in others for wealth by broadcasting images of our lifestyle around the world. The outcome: jealousy, resentment, and, yes, even hate.

If we didn't know it before September 11, 2001 we ought to know it now following the terrorist attacks. Where did terrorists attack?

Our natural resources? Our children and schools? Our places of worship? No, they attacked our money center. We appear to be a culture that worships our wealth. Attacking the World Trade Center, a proud symbol of that wealth, expresses outrage at what they see as the heart of our culture.

As Christians we know that Jesus was concerned about the pitfalls of a materialistic culture. Remember the parable of the sower? In it Jesus tells of a farmer planting seed. The farmer is Christ and the seed the word of God. Some seed fell on the path, some on the rocky places, some among the thorns, and some on the good soil. Concerning the seed that fell among the thorns, we are told in Mark 4:7, "...the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain". Jesus goes on to explain, "...but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing" (Mark 4:18 & 19). Jesus concludes the parable with, "let those who have ears to hear, hear" (Mark 4:9).

Could it be that like this seed, we in North America have heard the word but the lure of wealth and the desire for other things have come in and "choked it, and it yielded no grain"?

I wonder what Jesus thinks as he looks upon our sisters and brothers in the third world struggling to survive as we in North America worry about adding on another garage to store all of our things. Could it be

that when it comes to our possessions we are taking our cues from our culture rather than from Christ? I believe Christ is calling us to change the way we treat the wealth

entrusted to us. I believe that Christ is calling our North American Moravian Church to turn from our culture and look to him.

## Hampton Morgan, Jr.

### Let's Revisit the *Ground of the Unity*

2002, a year of provincial and Unity synods, marks the 45th anniversary of the adoption of the *Ground of the Unity* as the statement of faith of the Moravian Church. The 1957 Unity Synod that approved the *Ground of the Unity* was the first gathering of the worldwide Moravian Church after the end of World War II twelve years earlier. That Synod gave the Church a new doctrinal formulation. In the intervening years the world has changed much, while the *Ground of the Unity* has changed little. The Moravian Church should seize the moment provided by these first synods of the new millennium to at least begin a formal conversation about whether the *Ground of the Unity* remains a sufficient doctrinal foundation for the challenges of being the church of Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century.

In Confessing our Unity in Christ: Historical and Theological Background to *The Ground of the Unity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Moravian Archives, January 2000), Daniel Crews offers helpful insight into the context out of which the *Ground of the Unity* was developed. Crews notes that the impetus for a new doctrinal statement came from the shattering events experienced by European

Christians, especially the Germans, in the 1930s and 1940s. The German Evangelical Church capitulated in the face of Nazi ideology and many German Moravians were unable to resist the regime's demand that all citizens bow at the altar of this demonic power. It was the still vivid and bitter grief of the church's failure during those years that convinced European Moravians that a new doctrinal formulation was imperative. Though other provinces had not gone through the same experiences, the Holy Spirit cultivated a remarkable unity and the new doctrinal statement was unanimously approved.

Those urging a new statement did not start from scratch. They drew from their own Moravian theological tradition, but it seems clear that the Continental Moravians were also deeply influenced by the Theological Declaration of Barmen (Crews, p. 24). The Barmen Declaration (adopted in 1934) was the doctrinal affirmation of the "Confessing Church," those German Protestants who recognized very early in the unfolding of the Nazi project that the very soul of the German church was at stake. The Barmen Declaration targeted the heart

of the matter for German Christians living under a demonic regime and affirmed the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ over his church. One can clearly see the footprints of this strong emphasis in the *Ground of the Unity*.

In comparison with other confessions, the Barmen Declaration is remarkable for its brevity. To be sure, it was not an attempt to cover the entire theological waterfront, as did other historic Protestant confessions, the validity of which Barmen acknowledged. It spoke rather to an emergency situation using an economy of words to target what was most at issue in the life of German Christians living under Nazi power. The *Ground of the Unity*, containing only about 1,600 words (200 fewer than Barmen), is similarly brief and obviously targeted, making no attempt at theological comprehensiveness.

My effort to find in the Barmen Declaration a major inspiration for the *Ground of the Unity* is also an attempt to ask whether the Moravian Church understands the role of a doctrinal statement to be limited and targeted, addressing what is most at risk or at issue in the life of the church. I believe that it is and that this has generally been the role of creeds, confessions and doctrinal statements. Few if any confessions are produced in a vacuum. They arise out of the questions confronting the church, questions that demand more clarity than is available in a previous statement.

I assert that these first years of the new millennium are for today's Moravian Church

what those years during and after World War II were for the Moravians who gathered in the Unity Synod of 1957. We are confronted with a cultural challenge that is as potentially dangerous to the life and mission of the church as was the Nazi challenge of 70 years ago. But let me also state this positively because that which challenges also presents opportunity. The twenty-first century offers the potential for the church to experience a renewal that will better equip it for faithful missional engagement.

I believe that an essential part of faithfully responding to the challenge of the new millennium is, as it was for Moravians following World War II, having and promoting a confession of faith that speaks to what is at issue for the church in being faithful within the context of its situation. Since we are called not to isolation and individualism but to community, the church has the risky and unavoidable task of affirming a common faith that speaks with meaning, force and clarity. Moreover, it also has the task of standing behind that common confession as the belief of the church without wavering or apology.

It is often said that the theology of the Moravian Church is not confessional but relational. While there is some truth in this, such a categorical statement is misleading. Relational theology is indeed our inheritance from Zinzendorf and one of the attractive aspects of the Moravian Church. We have long been noted for our "religion of the

heart” that we understand and experience as a deeply personal relationship with Jesus that is also worked out in committed relationships with fellow believers within the body of Christ.

But the Moravian Church is also confessional. In the booklet mentioned above, Daniel Crews traces the doctrinal line from the ancient Unity to the modern Moravian Church. There has never been a time when the Moravian Church did not have a common confession that defined, as well as words are able to, what the church believes. Historically, this has not been an incidental aspect of our self-understanding, something to be marginalized as of secondary importance. In fact, as Crews points out, the Moravian Church has invested in this task on numerous occasions, seeking always for a confessional stance that is scriptural and speaks with contemporary relevance.

One of the theological challenges that has always faced the Moravian Church, and one in which it has generally succeeded, is the challenge of holding the confessional and the relational in a healthy and creative connection. The relational, like the branches and leaves of a tree, is more visible. The roots, however, are confessional. We are relational because of what we believe about the gospel, which is the soil from which our relational branches draw nourishment through our confessional roots. If the trunk is cut, the branches and roots will both die and the nourishment of the soil will be of no value. So also must the relational and con-

fessional aspects of our theology be held together if the church is to be healthy in its life and ministry.

The twenty-first century cultural challenges and opportunities (which were already having an impact the church before the magic moment of January 1, 2000) have strained the tension between the relational and confessional almost to the point of breaking. Though the *Ground of the Unity* still stands as the confessional statement of the Moravian Church, it appears at times to totter under the assault of a culture of relativism that has clearly had an impact on the way some Moravians think about truth.

Earlier this year in the pages of this journal, Truman Dunn shared his concern about the mission of the Moravian Church in the twenty-first century, stating that the source of the church’s growing irrelevance in post-modern culture is its exclusive truth claims, some of which are contained in the *Ground of the Unity*. Dunn identified in particular this statement from the second paragraph of the *Ground of the Unity*: “We believe and confess that God has revealed Himself once and for all in His Son Jesus Christ; that our Lord has redeemed us with the whole of humanity by His death and His resurrection; and that there is no salvation apart from Him.”

It would have been helpful to the important discussion that needs to take place about the *Ground of the Unity* and the role of doctrinal confession in our church if Dunn would have also suggested the

changes that would make the *Ground of the Unity* a more relevant statement of faith for the twenty-first century. Had he done so, I expect that what would have become obvious is that no doctrinal statement or confession is able to avoid exclusive truth claims. Anytime the church says, “We believe,” it is drawing a circle that implies that there is something else that lies outside of the circle that it doesn’t believe to be true. The more inclusive statement about the person of Jesus in relation to God and salvation that Dunn seems to desire cannot avoid the same mistake that Dunn bemoans the church has already made in the present statement. It will also exclude.

The Synod that developed and approved the *Ground of the Unity* clearly recognized the exclusive nature of doctrinal confessions. In the fourth major section of the *Ground of the Unity*, “Creeds and Confessions,” after stating that the “Unitas Fratrum recognizes in the creeds of the Church the thankful acclaim of the Body of Christ,” the Synod listed three ways in which creeds help the church. First, in “formulating a Scriptural confession.” Second, in “marking the boundary of heresies.” And third, in “exhorting believers to an obedient and fearless testimony in every age.”

Concerning “formulating a Scriptural confession,” the same paragraph affirms that the “Unitas Fratrum maintains that all creeds formulated by the Christian Church stand in need of constant testing in the light of the Holy Scriptures.” Is it time to test the

*Ground of the Unity* in light of the Scriptures or just in light of the prevailing culture? If we choose the latter, then the *Ground of the Unity* will surely fail the test, as would all the creeds that have gained some prominence throughout the Unity. If the former, then I believe the question is, “has the dawning of the twenty-first century created such a new situation and challenge that it is time for the church to lay the *Ground of the Unity* and the Bible on the table and test the former against the latter?” The Unity Synod is the forum where such a question is ultimately answered, but the discussion could certainly begin at a provincial synod.

Regarding “marking the boundary of heresies,” one wonders how seriously the Moravian Church takes this. The “H” word is simply not in our vocabulary or practice. To many the idea conjures images of trials, judgment, defrocking of clergy and excommunication. It is not surprising that a church with roots in the reforming ideas of John Hus would have little heart for using creeds and confessions as instruments of judgment, discipline or exclusion. This is where our understanding of our theology as relational clearly overshadows confessional considerations. But therein lies the key to honoring this understanding of the value of creeds. Accountability to one another seems to have broken down. A culture of individualism tries to empower each of us to live in theological isolation and construct our own spiritualities and creeds. There is often little sense that we are accountable to a

wider body that has, through appropriate assemblies, determined some boundaries for those who choose to be part of that body. We are concerned about a confessional baseball bat being used against the errant when the larger problem is a breakdown in relational accountability.

“Exhorting believers to an obedient and fearless testimony in every age” is a call to maintain the connection between faith and action. This is ultimately the highest purpose of any confession. Creeds are not vehicles to carry us to salvation but ways of expressing biblical faith and truth in a manner that helps us join word to deed and see the connection. Professing our faith in Jesus Christ as the One in whom “God has revealed himself once and for all” clarifies the uniqueness of the gospel story, sets it apart from other faith stories, and reminds the church of its reason for being: to join God in mission so that all of humanity will know God’s *shalom* in Jesus Christ.

I share with Truman Dunn and others a deep concern about the mission of the Moravian Church in the twenty-first century. We differ in our analysis as to why the anecdotal evidence suggests that our mission within North America is foundering and our church appears to be dying. Some identify the primary culprit as our exclusive truth claims about Jesus. I would argue that the theological individualism inherent in that prescription to the problem is the real culprit. It is rapidly undermining any sense of a common confession that connects us to

one another in a way that enables us to have *koinonia* in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4.5). The Moravian Church is atomizing theologically and therefore losing a cohesive voice at a time of great opportunity for witness and service.

How can this be addressed? First, I return to my point about holding our relational theological treasures in a healthy balance with our confessional theological treasures. We need to stop thinking that our choices are either/or and understand that they are both/and. We must work harder at honoring both while recognizing that each has limits. They are friends, not enemies. If the confessional gains the ascendancy, we may lose the relational. If the relational triumphs, the confessional will suffer.

Second, I think that it is time to bring into a synod setting some of the dialogue that has already been taking place about the *Ground of the Unity*. Does the Moravian Church still consider the *Ground of the Unity* to be a Scriptural confession that is targeted to what is at issue for the church today? Though there seem to be increasing pressures to do so, we have been avoiding this conversation for quite some time because it is a high-risk undertaking. We already know that the theological diversity of the church is wide. That is evident just in the day-to-day communications and interactions. A pointed conversation about the *Ground of the Unity* may highlight in a quite uncomfortable way just how wide our theological diversity is, but I think this is

unavoidable. The longer we postpone it, the longer we will exhibit those signs that have rightly been identified as pointing the way to demise.

The great fear, of course, is division or schism, but it is also possible that such a conversation could lead to renewal if we all are prepared to approach it with the humility, brokenness, and repentance that our current situation points to as necessary. Perhaps a new doctrinal statement for a new millennium is a gift God would be pleased

to give the Moravian Church. For me, the *Ground of the Unity* still rings true as a sufficient confessional foundation for the Moravian Church, but I am prepared to join in conversation with those for whom it does not.

*Hampton Morgan, Jr. is Executive Director, Board of World Mission.*

## Mallie Graham

### Diversity

Since being asked to write this article, I have asked questions, listened to pastors and friends, mused on the topic, observed different churches in action, read church periodicals, and I have come to some personal conclusions.

The greatest challenge for the Moravian Church in any province is how do we proclaim the good news of saving grace through Jesus Christ to our family, our church, our community, our Moravian world, and the world. After all, isn't this the mission of the church? This might be what you would expect me to say. However, why is this a challenge? After all, our renewed Moravian Church has been doing this since 1732. For me, it is a challenge for the church, and maybe not just Moravian, because of the diversity offered

to the church in the areas of worship style, music, clergy, administrative leadership, congregational make-up, finances, Sunday School curriculum, and so forth. DIVERSITY

Are we able to break from the traditions of our Moravian Church? Do we need to break from these traditions? Change is inevitable in all of life. Why not the church? What is Moravian? Is it in the eye of the beholder? All of these are questions to think about. I often hear the statement, "but that's not Moravian!"

The following things make something Moravian for some of us: First, liturgical worship with Moravian chorals and music; second, a focus on world mission, and third, connections with Moravians in Unity Provinces in worship and fellowship. For

others, a more evangelical form of worship with praise music and altar calls represents the Moravian Church.

I have found in my travels in the Moravian world that I am truly blessed through worship even though another language may be used. I know the hymns being sung as Moravian chorales. I know the band tunes as the ones we hear in God's Acre or at an August 13<sup>th</sup> celebration. Other people have other thoughts very different from mine as to "what is Moravian." Do the various groups of the denomination ever discuss their differences, or do we polarize ourselves and remain separate in thought and action?

Our denomination is small even though we number over 800,000 worldwide. In our Southern Province there is much diversity from church to church in the style of worship. Some of us would say that the forms of worship we experience in some of our congregations are not Moravian. If there are no liturgy and gospel hymns and camp choruses are used rather than chorales, or there are altar calls, some might feel this is not Moravian worship. Some of us would visit other churches to see if we could find "Moravian worship." Some people in a local congregation may accept contemporary praise worship service style but others find it offensive. How is this conflict being settled? Are we making attempts to communicate with those in our denomination that worship differently from us?

Have we become congregational rather than confessional in our attitude toward the church? We are a small denomination, and at one time whenever there was a provincial gathering most of our congregations would support the event. Now, local congregations plan things to suit their calendar, taking away from participation and attendance at provincial activities. Each event may be important, but do we lose something by not being connected in activities? My generation loved events that brought us together. Youth rallies and camps and conferences were opportunities to meet and know people who continue to be important to us to this day. A major result of this fellowship is Laurel Ridge. My generation purchased the first parcel of land that has now become a holy ground of camping and conferencing. Small churches were able to feel part of a larger group. Moreover, we knew, not knew of, but really knew missionaries and ministers from all over the Moravian world. These people became our avenues for our Christian nurture. It was like the ancient African saying that "it takes a village to raise a child." These people knew our names and what was happening in our lives. Are we and our children losing something by not being connected with others in the churches in our province? Is our diversity separating us from being united in our mission?

There are Unity Provinces whose members have separated from each other

with little communication between the different factions. This fact was made real to me last summer when I shared in the Unity Moravian Women's Consultation in South Africa. We were discussing mentoring women in Christian values and ethical decision-making. One sister said in our group discussion, "We can't do that in our Moravian Church because we have no older women." There are older women but they happen to be in the other "faction" of the church in that province. My heart aches because of this lost opportunity for both of these groups of women. .

In closing, I pray that our diversity, even though a challenge, can be a blessing. We are Christians. We are members of a worldwide fellowship whose members are our sisters and brothers scattered in Asia, Europe, the British Isles, the Americas, Africa, and the Caribbean Islands. In many instances we are able to call each other by name. My faith journey is so connected and enhanced by this fact. As a young person I shared time with my sister, Alice Hooker from Nicaragua, and in 1957 I met Moravians from around the globe as they came to Bethlehem, Pa. for Unity Synod. What a remembrance I have of that time. Do we share with our membership the magnitude of the love and prayer that exist for them in our Unity?

Tuesday, September 11, 2001 is a day in our country we will never forget. The terror we felt was also shared by our brothers and sisters in the Moravian world. I had

personal messages from Northern Ireland, England, South Africa, and Suriname. Our Moravian Unity cared and prayed for us. This is a blessing that I do not want us to lose. We cannot let our diversity, our differences, and our separateness drive us apart from one another.

Where does all of this leave us? I pray for our church. I pray that we might learn acceptance of each other in a spirit of love. I pray that we might learn to "really" listen to one another without judgment and with patience and kindness. Not any one of us, neither clergy nor laity, has "all" the answers. Can the separation that exists in some of our Unity Provinces affect us in America? I believe that it can, and that it is indeed with us in some situations. Our Moravian motto, attributed to Bishop John Amos Comenius, states "In essentials unity; in nonessentials liberty; and in all things love. Can we begin to communicate our mission and our motto as we face our diversity in the church? Without communicating in love, we will not be able to conquer our differences. The frightening thing is that some of us may not value a connectedness to achieve our Christian faith journey.

Please contemplate Samuel Benade's hymn:

We covenant with hand and heart to  
follow Christ, our Lord;  
With world, and sin, and self to part,  
and to obey His word,

To love each other heartily  
in truth and in sincerity  
And under cross, reproach and shame,  
To glorify His name.

*Mallie Graham is an educator and a member of  
Home Moravian Church.*

## John Scepanski

### The Moravian Church and Generation Why

Since the social revolution of the sixties, we have gotten into the habit of asking the question, why. My mother, a teacher, used to say that this is the difference between her generation and mine. Her generation did not question the conventional wisdom and knowledge. My generation, the baby boomers, was compelled to ask the why questions.

When I was growing up in the Lutheran Church during the fifties and sixties, we were well drilled in Bible verses, Luther's Small Catechism, liturgy, on so on. I still draw upon that training for much of value. I go to church every Sunday. I lead a Bible study. I count among my best friends the members of my church family. My life would have a big hole in it without my church and my church family. I still study the gospels, the prophets, the ancient patriarchs, as well as other religious systems. When I pray, I pray personally to Someone in a conversational manner and usually get feedback and comfort from that inner relationship. I claim Jesus Christ as my spiritual way, both in heart and head.

The things of the heart are feelings, faith, the confidence of things unseen, peace, serenity, and comfort in the presence of God, fellowship, relationships, the spiritual energy, and even the irrational or mystical -- the things perceived through methods other than logical reasoning. The Moravian Church does well in the heart department. The music, worship, prayer, meditation, healing, symbols, holidays, and the church calendar, all enhance the things of the heart. And they are good. However, many people of my generation and subsequent generations need more in the head department, not less in the heart department but more in the head department. Different ways work for different people. I want my Moravian Church to open minds as well as it opens hearts. I hope for a niche somewhere in the Moravian Church where we of the Why Generation can gather. Just a little niche.

#### I.

I must confess that I have been a student of the Jesus Seminar in the past, although not lately. The Jesus Seminar exposed me to the incredibly wide world of gospel study

from the point of view of history. Who was the Jesus of history? What did he actually say? What did he actually do? What sources in addition to the New Testament gospels and letters can we draw upon to understand Jesus Christ, his life and times, and the Word of God that he knew and taught to us? This is what the Jesus Seminar calls Bible literacy, and here are some of the questions that Biblically literate people commonly ask:

Why is there no birth story in the gospels according to Mark and John?

Why are some of the things we learn about Jesus Christ in the gospel according to John different from the things we learn about Jesus Christ in the gospels attributed to Mark, Matthew, and Luke?

How and when were the gospels written, why and by whom? Why were they chosen for the New Testament and none of the other dozen or so known gospels?

What was the place of women in first century Jewish society? What was the place of women in the first century Jesus movement?

How and why were the first three centuries of Christianity different from the centuries since?

A study undertaken from the viewpoint of Bible literacy, myth, metaphor, and

history is fascinating. It brought me, a baby boomer, to a spiritual comfort level in my head and in my heart. In fact, I think that the comfort level in my heart derives from the comfort level in my head.

## II.

Besides Bible literacy (not literalness), the most important need for the established Christian church to address is the exclusiveness-inclusiveness issue. I think the time has come to acknowledge the value of other ways to walk "The Way." The time has come to acknowledge that other great spiritual leaders taught essentially the same things (at least the things that we can know) that Jesus taught, and that different religions can enrich each other. God works from the inside out, not the outside in. That is one of the radical differences that Jesus made (Thomas 3, 113, Mary 4:3-7, Luke 17: 20-21).

Let us look at some examples of what inclusiveness might mean in the sense of sharing with other great religious systems. What might we Protestant Christians share with Roman Catholics, Hindus, Tao-ists, Confucians, Moslems? Consider this passage quoted by Chu Chai in the introduction to I Ching: Book of Changes (tr. by James Legge, New Hyde Park, N.Y., 1964):

One Yin and one Yang constitute what is called Tao. That which is perpetrated by it is good. That which is completed by it is the natures (of men and things). ...How prolific is its Te (Power) and

how great its achievement! The abundance of it is what is meant by “prolific Te” (Sec. I, Ch. 5).

Doesn't make sense? Work with it for a while, and see what Judeo-Christian parallels you can come up with. Some, maybe most, established Christian denominations might relegate the *I Ching* quickly and simply to the trashcan. Yet what of the Hindu Upanishads as described by Heinrich Zimmer in his book Philosophies of India (ed. by Joseph Campbell, Princeton, N.J., 1951)?

They (the philosophers of the period of the Upanishads) turned their backs on the external universe—the realm interpreted in the myths and controlled by the complicated rituals of the sacrifice—because they were discovering something more interesting. They had found the interior world, the inward universe of man himself, and within that the mystery of the Self (p. 356).

One of the prayers of the Upanishads reads, “From the unreal, lead me to the real; from darkness, lead me to light; from death, lead me to deathlessness.”

Anne Bancroft, in her introduction to The Dhammapada (Rockport, Mass., 1997), says this of the Buddha's methods of teaching, “His explanations are adapted to the capacity of his audience to understand them.” That was Jesus' method of teaching

too. Here are two of the many aphorisms attributed to the Buddha:

Celebrate the one who has woken.  
Celebrate the fire of his sacrifice and learn from him the way (verses 392).  
Neither matted hair, nor noble birth nor caste makes a wise man, but the truth and integrity with which he is blessed (393).

What of this from the Fattiha, the opening to the Qu'ran as quoted in Islam (ed. by John Alden Williams.)?

In the Name of God,  
the Merciful, the Compassionate.  
Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds,  
The Merciful One, the Compassionate One,  
The Master of the Day of Doom.

Thee alone we serve,  
to Thee alone we cry for help.  
Guide us in the straight path  
The path of them Thou hast blessed.  
Not those with whom Thou art angry,  
Nor those who go astray.

Do we have anything to share with these foreign religious systems? Do some of their tenets and heroes sound familiar? I think we hold a lot in common. God by any other name is always God.

### III.

In the post-modern age, the age of science and information, we must practice inclusiveness in order to reconcile ourselves with how we understand the universe. We do not have the same mind-set of ancient or medieval people or even people of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We know that "out there" is outer space with planets, stars, and black holes. The sky is not a big dome beyond which are celestial realms occupied by angels, demons, and gods. Science has learned that the sky is, well, air. We need new images and new paradigms. For example, Albert Einstein proved mathematically that the universe is eternal. His famous principle ( $E=mc^2$ ) communicates something to us about God. Energy and matter are forever changing into one another, and time is the joker in the deck.

Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared. The speed of light is infinity. Nothing can go faster than the speed of light. Now, multiply the speed of light by itself, and that number is beyond human comprehension -- like God. One ancient culture even named its ultimate god Kronos or time itself.

Is there a way of imaging God other than anthropomorphically? Might prayer be conceived of as communion with an Almighty who is greater than the sum of all the parts of the universe? Can this be the "ground of all being" that Paul Tillich was talking about? Science and faith are not

incompatible. They are not mutually exclusive. A host of new archeological discoveries around the world is adding to the mystery of our planet. I think that the spiritual has a lot to do with the scientific and vice-versa.

### IV.

The Moravian Church has a bold history of mingling with other denominations and other peoples. We can build on that history by expanding ourselves, that is, by becoming more inclusive. Are we strong enough, courageous enough, to establish missions of the head as well as missions of the heart? I think the Moravian Church is qualified to take this step. Our membership numbers have fallen, but we are solid in the things that count: things like tolerance, compassion, restraint, and liberalism (e.g., women in the ministry). We need missions of the head to minister to the Why Generation. However, let us not forget that inclusiveness includes so-called traditional ways of thinking and feeling and relating to God that have nourished and sustained so many people for so many generations. Each individual will find his or her own essentials of the spirit.

The fact of the matter is that there are no essentials, only complements, tolerance, and in all things love. We in the western world contribute through Jesus Christ. There are many ways to relate to the Eternal: "out there," inside out, person-to-person, self to

Self, and on. We Moravians have in the past, are in the present, and will in the future make our contributions through the grace of God and the guidance of our Chief Elder. As Alfred, Lord Tennyson, wrote:

I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch where thro'  
Gleams that untravelled world.

*John Scepanski is a public servant in Wisconsin and a member of the De Forest congregation.*

## Kerry Krauss

### A Moravian Quest for Identity

In 1998 I had the privilege and opportunity to serve as the “youth” representative for the Moravian Church on the National Council of Christian Churches. That year the annual conference was held in Chicago. One particular night the entire Council was bussed to the church in which the Council actually had its official beginning. On the bus ride, I was sitting next to a bishop in the American Methodist Episcopal Church from Cincinnati. He was a fine gentleman. When he asked me what “communion” I was with (NCCC lingo for “denomination”) I answered, “Moravian.” His eyes lit up, and his smile broadened into a huge grin. He told me how he receives a Daily Text every year and how proud we ought to be for our role in shaping the spiritual landscape of America.

I was dumbfounded. For a moment, I thought about correcting him: MORAVIAN not MORMON. But the more I thought about it, the more I was certain he knew what he was talking about. Why wasn't I as

sure as he was? I was born a Moravian and in the 28 years I had been living I had never heard anything about changing the spiritual landscape of America. During three years at Seminary, I never heard anything about changing the spiritual landscape of America. Several months into my first pastorate, the thought of changing the spiritual landscape of America had never once crossed my mind. So was I sitting next to someone who didn't know a thing about the Moravian Church, or was I sitting next to someone who knew and understood the Moravian Church better than we are able to know and understand ourselves?

The Moravian Church, to borrow a phrase from Winston Churchill, “is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” For 545 years we have stumbled forward. We have “changed the spiritual landscape of America.” We have inspired and impressed our Christian brothers and sisters around the world with our faith, devotion and energy. We ourselves, however, have been largely

ignorant and oblivious to what the Lord is doing through us. At least, I believe we are ignorant and oblivious to what the Lord is doing through us currently.

I have privately compared the Moravian Church to a person riding backward on a horse. The horse keeps moving forward, but we neither know how nor why nor where. We keep looking backward and are able to see the progress that has been made, but only retrospectively. Looking backward, we can neither repeat the glorious leaps and gallops that the church has made, nor can we avoid the obstacles and barriers that threaten to unseat us.

John Ortberg, in the introduction to his book *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), preaches, "I believe there is something, Someone, inside us who tells us there is more to life than sitting in the boat. You were made for something more than merely avoiding failure. There is something inside you that wants to walk on water, to leave the comfort of routine existence and abandon yourself to the high adventure of following God."

My greatest fear is that the Moravian Church in North America has succumbed to a belief and witness based on the fear of failure rather than desire for success. We're not as driven to succeed for Christ's Kingdom as much as we are driven to avoid failing Christ's Kingdom. At some point in our history, the Moravian Church (along with many other mainline Protestant

denominations) became comfortable, content, and complacent. I can imagine no greater threat to the success of the Moravian Church than our own comfort, contentment, and complacency.

The whole of Scripture, the entire earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, the witness and experiences of the early Christian Church, and the fathers and mothers of the Moravian Church call us to serve Jesus **boldly, passionately and without fear**. Jesus challenged the status quo of his day and taught his followers to want and expect more. The Church in its infancy refused to grow comfortable, content and complacent. The early Moravians, both in Prague and Herrnhut, hungered to make a difference in their world. Is this what our congregations are currently working for? Is our witness bold, passionate and without fear? Are we really trying to make a difference in our world? Or are we trying to preserve a history and heritage? Are we trying to sustain what is? Or, even worse, are we expending our talents and energies working to hold on to something that no longer exists and can never exist again?

Complaint is easy. Solution is somewhat more difficult. I do not believe there is any one step or easy solution. I do not believe there is a church-wide, systemic solution. Nor do I believe that a Synodical Resolution can magically reinvigorate our Church. There is no simple solution to make all of our troubles disappear.

I know this next statement is going to sound contradictory to what I have been previously expressing. It may even be a bit hypocritical, but I believe the solution to the *ennui* and stagnation in which the Moravian Church is currently mired lies in our past.

The solution lies in our relationships and in our ability to relearn what “Moravian Community” and “Moravian Relationship” mean for a culture and generation that is growing increasingly more and more afraid of “community” and “relationship.” The solution lies in our ability to find our Moravian identity, and express that identity in new and meaningful ways.

Here is an example. Recently, the father of a Moravian pastor died quite tragically in a house fire in Allentown, Pa. At the memorial service there were two Moravian clergy, one Moravian bishop, one Moravian seminary student and one Moravian pastor’s wife. There were several members from a local congregation that the pastor formerly served. In the midst of a large room filled with people, I found myself wondering where this pastor and his family were being supported. Did the rest of the Moravian Church know of his pain and loss? Was the Church aware of this person’s need? Did they care? Where was the Moravian community? Where were this pastor’s brothers and sisters?

I concluded that day that we have forgotten how to support each other. We have forgotten what it means to consider each other “Sister” and “Brother.” We have

forgotten that relationship and community are the heart and soul of all things Moravian. We have lost the most important part of our identity and character. Our forefathers and foremothers in Herrnhut, Bethlehem and Salem knew what it meant to be in relationship with each other. They knew the great joy and the great sorrow of living, believing and serving Christ as a community. We have lost this. We need this. We suffer because we don’t have it.

I don’t believe rediscovering our Moravian identity will be all that difficult. It will take some work, and some time, but it’s not an impossible task. The real difficulty lies in expressing that identity in new and meaningful ways for a new generation of people. This has always been a problem. This will always be a problem. Ever since the first generation of disciples passed away, each successive generation has been forced to accept, reject, blend, borrow, add and subtract to the corpus of faith. In doing so, each generation has claimed ownership and has redefined the Christian tradition. I would add that this process has occurred with great success.

The same can be said of the Moravian Church. We have learned and been enlightened by Hus and his struggle. We have prayed ardently with Comenius. We have wandered through Europe trying to avoid trouble. We have settled in at Herrnhut and allowed the Holy Spirit to breath new life and new energy into us. We have truly gone to all the world to make disciples of all

peoples and nations. Each successive generation has had to claim ownership in the "Moravian" heritage and has then redefined and reclaimed it according to each generation's standards, sensibilities and experiences.

This is, I believe, an important and necessary aspect of our faith and the way God intended it. Isaiah prophesied, "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" I believe that God is trying to do something new with the Moravian Church. Are we ready? Are we able to perceive it?

There is an immutable law of God that dictates that there is pain involved in creating and re-creating. It is a law we encounter over and over in the natural world. It is a law we encounter over and over in our personal lives. It is a law we encounter over and over in our faith, politics and culture. Pain is a part of the creation. I imagine there was a degree of pain at the beginning of Creation. As day and night were born, light and darkness, land and sea, plant and animal, man and woman; as these parts of the created whole were born, there was pain. As salvation came to the world in the person of Jesus Christ there was pain; not only the physical pain of child birth, but the social pain of giving birth in a stable, and the spiritual pain of being a part of God's plan.

There was pain on Good Friday as Christ's body was broken and his blood was shed as a sacrifice for our sins. There was the joyful pain of Sunday as new life and new hope entered the world through Christ's resurrection. There was pain at the birthing of the church on Pentecost as the Holy Spirit breathed fire and flame on an expectant and hopeful people. The body of Christ has continued to endure through centuries of pain, sometimes at the hands of others, sometimes self-inflicted.

The lesson is simple but profound: rebirth is painful. I believe God is moving the Moravian Church to a transformation that could rival the August 13th experience. Transformation is never easy. Given the option of painful transformation and contented lethargy, it is understandable why we might choose the second. However, if we continue to avoid the transformation to which we are called, if we continue to avoid the pain and discomfort, if we continue to avoid the "new thing" that God is doing in our midst; then the world will one day only know of what the Moravians did so many lifetimes ago. We, and only we, have the ability to avoid that fate. Let us be brave; let us take courage and pride; let us to serve Jesus **boldly, passionately and without fear**. God will reward our faith.

*Kerry Krauss is pastor of Edgeboro Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pa.*

## Letters

To the Editor:

Maggie Wellert and Margaret Leinbach's proposal for the Good Samaritan as a new metaphor for the ordained and lay ministry of the church is a much needed attempt at revising the present understanding of, in particular, the ordained ministry. In their use of servant and shepherd models, they describe well the extremes in the pastoral expectations of congregations, as well as the self-chosen models of many pastors. I see many of us, as pastors, choosing the shepherd or servant model as the dominant model in our work, not just because we are convinced that we are following the model Jesus gave us, but also out of a need to be loved and adored by our congregations. As shepherds, we see ourselves as "set apart" and as the authority on all things spiritual, as well as being "responsible" for the whole church (flock). As servants, we sacrifice ourselves and our families, so that everyone will admire how hard we work and how much we love the Lord.

I share Maggie and Margaret's desire to find a metaphor that is less hierarchical and more mutual and reciprocal. However, I agree with those respondents who noted that it will be difficult to use one metaphor to fully capture the essence of ministry. Yet I suspect that all of us tend to "prefer" one model, even unconsciously, and we follow that model most often. I, for one, think it is high time we let go of the old, hierarchical models for ministry.

In fact, I see Maggie and Margaret's call for a less hierarchical model for ministry as being part of a larger dilemma in the church today. Our ministry models are hierarchical because the entire church is grounded in hierarchy, including our theology. The theological foundations of our church are built on a hierarchical understanding of God, using terms such as king, sovereign, master, lord, servant, slave, sinner, unclean, and so forth. These models came to us more than 3,000 years ago and served the Christian community for many years in societies that were hierarchical.

If we are ever going to change our sense of the ministry to a more mutual, shared ministry of lay and ordained, we cannot simply change the metaphor. We must do the difficult work of theological reflection and reformation which will become the theological foundation for a new vision of how we relate to God in ways that are less hierarchical, and how we relate to one another in ministry in ways that are also less hierarchical.

--- Truman Dunn

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The Hinge  
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