



THE HINGE

*A Journal of Christian Thought
for the Moravian Church*

***Readiness for Ordination:
A Statement by the PECs***

*Hilda Barry, Will Harstine, Barbara Rich,
Robert Rierson, Neil Routh, Keith Weatherman*

PEC Response: Betsy Bombick

Winter 2003
Volume 9, Number 4



The Hinge

Volume 9, Number 4: Winter 2003

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.

Notes from the Editor

In This Issue

American churches are facing a crisis of leadership. Every major study of mainline denominations has shown that clergy morale has been in continual decline since the 1950s. Few clergy report being happy and fulfilled in their work. Fewer people are pursuing their sense of vocation by entering the ranks of full-time religious service. The average age of seminarians has risen dramatically in the last decade, which means that the expected years of service of a pastor are lower than in the past. It has become very difficult for smaller, especially rural congregations to have full-time pastors. Congregations can expect long vacancies between pastors. Pastors in distress more often choose to leave the ministry rather than move to a new congregation.

The Moravian Church is not immune to these trends. In fact, because of our size, the social forces that are affecting larger denominations can have a more pronounced effect on us. While no systematic study of the Moravian clergy has been done in over a decade, there is evidence that our church is also facing a crisis in leadership. This was indicated in the state of the church address given to the Southern Province synod in 2002. There are signs that the morale of Moravian clergy is low and conflict between pastors and those they serve is high.

It appears that some of the frustration in the Moravian church centers around the call process. At one time, a call from the PEC had the force of an appointment. It was rare for pastors to reject a call, and it was rare for congregations to reject the names of potential pastors provided by the PEC. Times have changed. The geographical spread of the church in the United States is greater than ever, making moves more disruptive. The need for pastors' spouses to pursue careers has reduced mobility, and congregations have asserted more authority in the selection of pastors. Simply put, it has become harder for the denomination to place pastors in churches, but at the same time, the demands placed upon pastors by congregations and the denomination have increased.

The PECs of the Northern and Southern Provinces have been struggling with this ministerial crisis for some time. One result of their work is a new document that outlines the denomination's expectations of those entering the Moravian ministry. By clarifying what the denomination expects of ordained persons, the PECs hope to prepare ministerial candidates for the realities of ministry in the Moravian Church before they enter the ranks of the clergy. Although this document was prepared for new clergy, it shows what the PECs most value in the ministry. Thus

it offers insight into the direction the church is taking with leadership. Naturally, it reflects the PECs' primary concern of providing leadership for all congregations.

The PECs graciously agreed to allow *The Hinge* to publish these expectations for new clergy and invite responses from a variety of persons in the church. While supportive of the effort to clarify expectations before ordination, the respondents raise questions about the tone of this document and what the tone says about the PECs' view of ordained clergy. Will this statement of expectations encourage or discourage men and women who are struggling with a sense of call?

Betsy Bombick, a lay member of the PEC who served on the Southern PEC during the drafting of this document, agreed to respond to the respondents and give some of the rationale behind this statement of expectations. You are invited to write to *The Hinge* and share your own ideas regarding the direction our church should take in preparing ministers for effective service.

Announcements

Free copies of *The Hinge* for Moravian clergy! *The Hinge* continues to develop and grow. Our relationship with the Center for Moravian Studies is bearing rich fruit. Thanks to the generosity of the Center, *The Hinge* will now be provided to all ordained clergy free of charge. If you are listed in the *Daily Texts* as clergy, you will automatically receive *The Hinge* unless you tell us to remove your name from our database. This will allow *The Hinge* more effectively to serve as a forum for the entire Moravian Church.

Lifetime subscriptions! Laypersons can still subscribe to *The Hinge* as well. If you are already receiving *The Hinge* you will continue to do so without the need for renewing your subscription. New subscriptions will require a one-time fee of \$30 to be added to the mailing list. You will remain on the mailing list until you either indicate to us to remove your name or you move and do not change your address! Changes or corrections in addresses should be directed to Jane Burcaw at Moravian Theological Seminary (1200 Main St., Bethlehem, PA 18018). New subscribers should use the form at the end of this issue.

Upcoming Issues: "Singing is Believing," by Nola Reed Knouse
"Race in the Moravian Church" by Kathryn Woestendiek

Expectations of the Provincial Elders' Conferences, North and South To Insure Readiness for Ordination

Approved by the PECs meeting jointly, June 2, 2001

In its document, *Steps to Ordination*, the Provincial Elders' Conferences, North and South (PEC's) state that they are charged by Synod to "call and superintend the ministers of the Province under rules and regulations laid down by the Synod." It therefore becomes the responsibility of the PEC's to be proactive in providing the best preparation and education possible for approved ministerial candidates planning to enter the parish ministry of the Church.

The responsibility begins with the candidate approval process. An essential element is the candidate's personal sense of a call by God to ordained ministry. Nonetheless, our church believes that discerning a call also includes the Provincial Elders' Conference (and any review committees from which they request assistance) and the Elders or Church Board of the candidate's congregation.

After an approved ministerial candidate has fulfilled the church requirements for ordination, the PEC's expect that the candidate for ordination will meet the following spiritual, pastoral, leadership and denominational expectations:

Spiritual Expectations

The candidate for ordination must possess a vital and living relationship with Jesus Christ, and exhibit a sense of call to the Christian

ministry. Candidates must affirm that the ministry, while calling for professional skills, is even more importantly a calling, a vocation.

The candidate for ordination must possess a servant attitude, understanding fully that his or her first allegiance is to Jesus Christ, the Chief Elder of the Moravian Church. "*The ordained minister remains a servant of Christ and the Church as a whole, not merely to the congregation to which he/she is called. Even as Jesus Christ came not to be ministered unto but to minister, so his servants should be willing to minister wherever the church calls them under the leading of the Holy Spirit.*"²¹ This means that the candidate for ordination will understand that he/she must be willing to consider any call to ordained service throughout the Moravian Unity.

The call to the ministry for those who accept and receive ordination commits them to a life of service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the discipline of the church. Any and all calls to pastoral service result from this guidance.

In accordance with Moravian practice and procedure, a minister is confronted from time to time with a call to move on and to accept new tasks and responsibilities. The acceptance of such a call, in most cases, involves the termination of a call to service previously accepted. The ministerial family is often uprooted and relationships are severed and

broken. This termination of a call is a matter of serious concern. It is an inescapable part of the burden of the ministry.

The ordained minister as the servant of Christ and the church is a pilgrim during active ministry with no fixed and permanent home. His/her roots are not in any one place or congregation. The minister is under compulsion to follow the Lord's leading and to go wherever the Lord calls.

It is a demand, for which there is no compromise, that the ordained servant of Christ keeps an open mind and spirit toward this concept of pilgrimage. It is the duty of the Provincial Elders' Conference to administer the affairs of the province so that such an itinerancy is possible. This is for the good of the Province as a whole, the congregation, and the ordained ministry. (Book of Order, Southern Province)

Just as Jesus Christ, *came not to be served, but to serve*, the candidate for ordination must possess a spirit of genuine humility, recognizing that one's life is a means through which the grace and love of God are administered to the body of Christ.

A candidate for ordination must understand that service is under the authority of Christ, the synods of the church, the Provincial Elders' Conference and local church boards. Candidates must recognize that they are accountable to God, self and others. (See the document *Standards of Responsible Behavior for Ordained Ministers of the Moravian Church.*)

It is imperative that candidates for ministry care for their own personal faith in Christ and establish regular spiritual disciplines that will

help nurture and sustain them "in a variety of experiences which the work of the parish ministry brings."² This includes having their own pastor or counselor, one to whom they can share their own personal and spiritual concerns. Candidates for ordination are encouraged to seek the counsel of their presbyter partners after ordination and look to the Bishops of the church for encouragement and counsel. Pastors should always recognize the value in having another spiritually mature person to provide spiritual direction.

The candidate for ordination will be expected to serve as an example of Christian living, following closely the Standards of Responsible Behavior for Ordained Ministers of the Moravian Church approved by the Synods of 1998.

Pastoral Expectations

Since the Moravian understanding of call to service and the ordination that follows a call are tied directly to parish ministry, ministerial candidates must exhibit a readiness to minister in the variety of ways such a ministry requires. One must be prepared to lead worship and proclaim the Word of God in Moravian settings. Candidates must possess a basic understanding of the distinctiveness of Moravian liturgics and worship, and be prepared to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church in a parish setting. (*Standards of Responsible Behavior*, IV.3)

In light of these expectations, candidates for ordination must possess a thorough understanding of scripture, theology and history and use the tools gained from these

disciplines to interpret the faith in ways that are meaningful and pertinent to the culture in which they are called to serve.

A candidate for ordination must understand that in the Moravian context, the work of the parish is centered in the foundational work of “pastoring,” tending the flock of God through visitation (both hospital and home), counseling, encouraging and being a visible reminder of the presence of God through the various stages and scenes of people’s lives. This pastoral office is a sacred and holy trust. To pastor effectively, candidates must understand that they are called to be individuals who are self aware, who understand their own humanity and who can judge when it is best to refer parishioners to other professionals for assistance.

Pastoral expectations call for the candidate to be mature in judgment and behavior, dependable, conscientious and honest. Candidates must be prepared to live by the rule and authority of scripture, the Moravian Covenant for Christian Living and the Standards of Responsible Behavior for Ordained Ministers of the Moravian Church.

Leadership Expectations

Candidates for ordination must have a clear understanding of Biblical leadership that calls for ministers to use spiritual gifts, learning and resources to “equip the saints for ministry.” Leadership in the truest sense is helping the people of God to understand and discover their spiritual gifts so that the work of ministry is a shared venture rather than an individual one. While there is much in

ministry that involves continuity with the past and the administration of an organization, the PEC’s believe that our post-modern age calls for pastors who will, by prayer, inspiration and personal influence, inspire and challenge congregations to move forward and find their vision, seeking the best ways to share the gospel of Christ in our changing and diverse culture. In our best understanding, pastoral leaders are called by Christ to move beyond the status quo. Therefore they should be persons who can demonstrate creativity, imagination, and innovation in their ministry.

In order to provide this type of transformational leadership, candidates for ordination must be well versed in the scriptural understanding of spiritual gifts and must be equipped to teach their use and discovery in a parish setting. They must also have a thorough knowledge of the culture and context in which they serve.

The PEC’s expect candidates to understand that part of pastoral work involves administration, which is learning first and foremost how to delegate ministries to other responsible leaders in the local church.

The candidate for ordination must be prepared to exercise basic administrative and organizational skills in order to manage the demands of ministry. Maintaining church records, answering phone calls, e-mails and correspondence within a reasonable time limit is imperative for the establishment of personal integrity and trust. Candidates must be self-starters and self-finishers who can manage their time effectively. They must be good administrators who recognize their

limitations and are prepared to find people in the local church who can complement their ministries with the gifts and graces God has given to others.

Denominational Expectations

Candidates for the Ordained Ministry of the Moravian Church must understand clearly that they serve our Chief Elder through a confederal system of church government. It is a polity that is not hierarchical or authoritarian, but neither is it individualistic and independent. In such a system (or polity), authority is not vested in an individual, but is a shared authority and governance lived out in the “give and take” among the PEC’s, the pastor and the local church boards, always under provincial and Unity synods. (*Standards for Responsible Behavior*, IV. 3 A) We are Christians first and Moravians second, but there are some defining characteristics that give our church a unique ministry.

Pastors are not free agents. They serve under the authority of the PEC’s and local church boards. Candidates for ordination must understand that they serve under authority and are accountable for their work to the local church and to the PEC’s. Candidates, once ordained, must understand that they are to be respectful of authority, and possess an openness to constructive criticism when merited and necessary.

Candidates for ordination must be willing to be a part of the Moravian Church they serve, demonstrating by word and action their support and understanding that our church is confederal and connected rather than autonomous and congregational. Our ministry as provinces and as a Unity is a ministry we do best when we are working together.

¹ “The Ministry,” Book of Order of the Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, ¶800.

² *Steps to Ordination: A Policy Adopted by the Provincial Elders’ Conference, Moravian Church, Southern Province*, April 11, 2000

Responses

Barbara Rich

I appreciated the sentence in the first paragraph of this document that states, “It therefore becomes the responsibility of the PECs to be proactive in providing the best preparation and education possible for approved ministerial candidates planning to enter the parish ministry of the Church.” However, as I read the *Expectations* the thought crossed my mind that I would have been scared to death had I read this piece as I entered seminary for my first year of theological education. I certainly had a “vital and living relationship with Jesus Christ” and a strong sense of call to the Christian ministry. I was a willing, but frightened, middle-aged wounded woman unsure of my self-worth. Having a strong sense of call but with little confidence in myself to pastor a congregation, I needed the whole process of education and experience in order to grow in confidence, self-assuredness, and ability to draw boundaries and make good judgments. The “servant attitude” was no problem, but the servant must also have a sense of expertise, a sense of authority, a strong sense of self-hood.

At the time I had no problem with understanding the concept of “moving on,” of uprooted family and broken and severed relationships. I had been through all that before I even got to seminary. Was there to be even more of that as my future in the ministry unfolded?

There are so many negatives in the fourth paragraph under “Spiritual Expectations.” “Termination” of a call, “inescapable,” “burden.” Perhaps “the burden of ministry” could be better expressed as the “awesome responsibility,” or the “responsible privilege.” It’s hard to find a sense of joy in these paragraphs.

In the fifth paragraph, can it not be said that the “pilgrim” is to make his or her home everywhere and anywhere, rather than has no home? Realistically, one must admit that in this day and age, pastors’ spouses have occupations that require them to stay in one area; therefore pastors request and are granted (often) calls to nearby churches. Clergy couples ask for churches close together. Clergy families purchase homes. Is it truly expected that “it is a demand, for which there is no compromise” that a pastor be open to pilgrimage? Yes, keep an open mind to Christ and His moving Spirit, but He may be calling one next door as well. Yes, Jesus commanded the disciples to go to Samaria and all the world to tell the good news. But he also told the woman at the well (John 4) and the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5) to go home to their own towns and tell their neighbors what Jesus had told them and done to them.

I certainly agree with the last four paragraphs of “Spiritual Expectations,” recognizing the importance of the authority of the Church, synods and PEC. I also agree with the four

paragraphs under “Pastoral Expectations,” but more should be said about the expectation and need for growth. Growth is a process, not necessarily found immediately in the first year theological student. One is not likely to be the same person upon graduation that he or she was at the beginning. Nor was I the same person ten years after graduation. Certainly one’s immaturity or lack of readiness needs to be weighed in the evaluation process, but “wait” should not be a closed door and growth should be encouraged and expected, especially after added learning and hands-on experience as well as council with one’s “presbyter partners.”

While a theological student answering a call to ministry may come to seminary with many gifts, intelligence and good grades, he or she may still be growing into “maturity in judgment and behavior.” There is so much more need for loving guidance and direction by those in authority, rather than judgment and rejection.

Again, under “Leadership Expectations,” I believe it needs to be stressed that candidates are learning to be “self-starters and self-finishers who can manage their time effectively.” Candidates are not yet ordained; candidates are students learning how to be pastors, learning what their limitations are through spiritual direction, therapy, and every course, exam and research paper. The last two sentences in the last paragraph seem to make a leap from candidate (student, intern) to mature pastor and skilled administrator. In between there should be included the expectation of the professors to the students and the supervising pastors to

the interns that they will teach and lead their apprentices toward expertise in their gifts.

Finally, I say “yes” to the “Denominational Expectations.” I value the confessional system of church government where the authority of individuals is like the authority with which Jesus taught; self authority, that is, a inner confidence, trust in the guidance of his Holy Spirit through each individual in the Unity. May the Church and all those in “authority” make sure that each candidate for the ministry learns and practices the “defining characteristics” of the Moravian Church. Clergy and laity disagree on many issues, in particular the interpretation of Scripture regarding modern day ethical issues. But we are able to pray together, partake of Holy Communion together, and sing together in love and respect for one another. We work at being true to our motto: “In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; and in all things love.” As devout Moravian Christian pastors, we aim to live that motto and to teach it to our congregations.

One last word: To be a part of the Moravian Church that one serves, pastors do make their home there, even though temporarily. They do find joy in the service to their Lord and to their neighbors rather than a burden. It is a joy shared with those in authority and who have more expertise, and the joy of the Lord in one’s heart. I believe this is a spiritual expectation to be constantly stressed, over and above any sense of burden, brokenness or uprootedness.

Rev. Rich is pastor of Reading Moravian Church in Pennsylvania.

Hilda S. Barry

Having served as a member of the Provincial Elders' Conference of the Southern Province and as vice-chairman of the Board of Elders of Trinity Moravian Church, my response to the "Expectations" document reflects influences from both of these experiences. From the perspective of either experience, studying of this document leaves me with a sense of wonder at how beautifully it describes sacrificial love in action in the real life of the world. It is the standard Jesus Christ calls for in his high priestly prayer. "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Jesus Christ prays for future believers to unite in service, go to the world and love one another. He requires an open mind and spirit of his ordained pilgrims, expecting them to consider any call throughout the Moravian Unity.

When divine urgings lead a person to seek service as a minister of the Moravian Church, the call to ordained service entails giving up the right to be in charge. The approved candidate must submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the superintendence of the Provincial Elders' Conference and the authority of the local church boards. Submission is a first step toward experiencing the freedom and joy of choosing to be used by God. The best preparation and education by the PECs helps the candidate count the cost before plunging headlong into an emotional decision. The "Expectations" document provides a vision for this vocational path. By clearly describing

the expectations of a ministerial candidate planning to enter the parish ministry of the Church, the PECs enable the candidate to more fully explore the various dimensions of the call. If the spiritual, pastoral, leadership and denominational expectations seem too troublesome, it is better that the candidate face the hard expectations early on rather than later. All too often ministers acknowledge they had no idea how difficult and demanding parish ministry would be.

The "Expectations" document calls for ministry that is a shared venture rather than an individual one. This reflects Jesus Christ's great desire for his disciples to become one, unified as a powerful witness to the reality of God's love. The daily work of parish ministry presents many opportunities to slip into isolation and congregationalism which fracture community. It is important to the health and vitality of the Moravian Church that we uphold the expectation that our Church is confessional and connected rather than autonomous and congregational. Failure to uphold this belief undermines any hope of working together.

Although administration is frequently not a favored part of parish service, it is an expectation that deserves attention because good leadership skills build trust. Careful use of time, a focus on goals, attention to the details of communication, involvement of others through committees, and many other administrative tasks can have far reaching consequences in moving a congregation to greater levels of ministry. It is a form of pastoral

work that glorifies God when the candidate searches for the holy in the ordinary.

Surely the “Expectations” document will arouse in the candidate a troubled sense of the immensity of the decision to accept the call to ministry. Is it possible to love others as Jesus loves us? Can one stop allowing small problems to get in the way of loving other believers? Can anyone truly love enemies? Jesus Christ commands that we love them and He will give the strength to do it. Through genuine humility, the practice of spiritual disciplines and openness to spiritual direction from other spiritually mature persons, the candidate becomes a visible reminder of the presence of God. As the life of the candidate is transformed, it gives hope that lives in the parish will also be transformed by the ministry of this candidate.

One of the most crucial tasks of the Provincial Elders’ Conference is the matching of pastors and congregations in the preparation of call lists. There is joy and satisfaction in witnessing pastor-congregation relationships develop fruitfully and disappointment and pain in dealing with those that turn out otherwise.

Will Harstine

The expectations of the PECs as set forth in the main article hold no surprises. Be good, do good work, be a good team player, work for the good of the denomination. That pretty much sums it up, and who will quarrel with these solid expectations? But when spelled out, these expectations say too much in some places, too little in others, and nothing at all

The power of serious and frank exchanges between pastors and boards enables the covenant relationships to develop in a healthy manner. The PECs expectations provide a framework to help candidates become more skillful in developing healthy relationships.

I believe the “Expectations” document will strengthen the ordained ministry in our provinces by expanding the insight the candidate brings to ministry. The guidance this document offers to a candidate speaks to the agreement between believers that is so essential that Christ places it as a condition of God’s response. If the candidate realizes that he or she is seeking or avoiding the guidance provided by the “Expectations” document, that in itself will be helpful in providing more self-awareness about the call to ministry. Deeper insights come when individuals listen to other believers and examine personal beliefs in the light of standards such as the “Expectations” document. The PECs expectations will lead the ministerial candidate to Christ’s expectations: unite in service, go to the world and love one another.

Hilda Barry is a member of Trinity Moravian Church in Winston-Salem.

in at least one important area. First the “too much.”

At a number of places in the document one gets the clear message about the need to be ready to move anywhere in the world in order to answer a “call.” The pastor is itinerant; that’s the idea. I sense denominational frustration here reflecting, no doubt, the

current difficulties that typically surround almost every “call” situation, to say nothing of a growing and healthy sensitivity to the demands of contemporary family life that places many calls beyond the realm of realistic consideration. The PECs need to realize this as a fact of modern life and not make it sound as if only those willing to uproot their families continuously are qualified for ordained ministry. The Church is served best not when pastors are moved all over the chess board every few years but when pastors learn the art of leadership and exercise it effectively in fairly long-term pastorates.

Second, the “too little.” There simply is not enough emphasis in this document upon the spiritual life of a pastor, leading outward into theological and exegetical study, and then onward towards the spiritual leadership of a congregation. Above all else, the pastor is expected these days to provide a spiritual foundation upon which all of a congregation’s activities will be constructed. The cornerstone of this foundation is the regular corporate worship of God in Christ Jesus, by far the most frequent activity of every congregation. The document would be strengthened if it were to dwell more clearly upon the pastor as spiritual person and as spiritual leader who challenges a congregation weekly with regard to its liturgical potential. To say this another way, the document should declare that the primary expectation of the Church is that the pastor be a well-grounded, competent, inspiring and faithful leader of the people at worshi

Third, the “nothing at all.” Would you believe, after all the weeping and wailing at top levels over numerical decline, after repeated attempts over the past thirty years to discover viable methods of church growth, not one word in this document addresses evangelism or outreach, except perhaps for an oblique reference. I thought the time had come to discourage maintenance ministry and replace it with a concept of ministry that reaches beyond the walls. If so, let’s expect candidates for ordination to have “church growth eyes”. Let’s expect those who believe they are called of the Lord to demonstrate that they know that the Lord calls his people to minister to the world and to reach the lost. Let’s expect someone seeking ordination to have had evangelistic and social action experiences. Let’s ordain no one who believes the job is only to shepherd the flock.

Many good things are said in this document. But the overall tone is one of protecting the denomination and producing traditional pastoral care type leaders. The document could become stronger if it were to reflect some of the concerns I have mentioned. May I also suggest that the word “minister” never be used when “ordained minister” or “clergyperson” or “pastoral leader” is intended. All of the baptized are ministers. This document is directed towards the baptized who seek to serve as *ordained* ministers.

Dr. Will Harstine is Professor of Pastoral Theology at Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem.

Neil Routh

Given the events of the both recent Synods (Northern and Southern Provinces), I wonder what is happening to the culture of ministry for ordained clergy within the Moravian Church in America and Canada? What difference will the “Readiness for Ministry Statement” (RFM) make in assisting candidates for ministry in their discernment? Most importantly, does this statement support an environment that intrinsically promotes the well-being and wholeness of persons in ordained ministry?

When I returned from attending the Southern Province Synod, I became painfully aware that the expectations many people have for our clergy seem to be growing larger and more rigid. Others are worried we are losing sight of the general ethos and practice that has operated within the church for many years. At a time when creative and inspiring leadership is needed, clergy seem all the more anxious and fearful that they will be misunderstood.

Instead of fostering a corporate sense of excitement for ministry, many clergy are anxious to take a lower profile and just serve in virtual anonymity until retirement sets them free. A statement made by Robert Sawyer during his “State of the Church” address continues to ring in my ears: “There is latitude (in the church) for an individual to express doubt and to wonder... Those who serve the church as ordained pastors have a somewhat different calling and responsibility.” It was one time I truly wish there had been a question/response time. I wanted to know what is implied by “a different calling and responsibility.” What are

the real boundaries within which a minister is expected to live and serve? What obligation does a minister have to honor such expectations if they significantly change from those that existed when he or she was first ordained?

Regarding the RFM, it seems to do a good job of clarifying what behavior is expected of the minister but not at defining what the minister can expect of the church. By its existence, it seems to represent a “corporate policy” on the part of the PECs for how a minister is expected to act without being a covenant on their own part. For example, I wonder what happens to a candidate that becomes a minister only to discover at a future Synod that a new policy is passed that makes continued service in the Moravian Church impossible?

We all want assurances that no present or future debate will derail us, at least the part of the church in which we personally have a stake. The character and example demanded of clergy today has never been more crucial. My guess is that this document reflects the attempt of the Provincial Elders to define this reality. But it seems to lack a covenant on the part of the PECs to the candidate to support his or her well-being and wholeness, thus it appears to be a statement of professional obligation rather than a sacred covenant.

The Alban Institute recently indicated (September/October edition of the Alban Institute website magazine) that the vast majority of clergy in America do not experience joy in their work. It noted that thirty percent of clergy are happy, while another thirty percent feel ambivalent and forty percent are

in the some stage of burn out. The article noted that personal spiritual formation, appropriate leadership skills, and a breakdown in relationship between the judicatory and the minister were primary factors for this alarming trend. It suggested that the antidote for this demise involves a combination of ministers taking better care of their own well-being and spiritual nurture and developing more relevant leadership skills for the present times. In addition it stated that much of the onus is on the respective judicatories to find more affirming ways to relate to the clergy who are under their supervision.

The RFM statement seems to reflect well what has always been expected of clergy in the Moravian Church. This is great stuff, as long as conflict is minimal. What are the PECs prepared to do when conflict is significant or when the minister feels overwhelmed? “No one is an island,” we say, and certainly no minister can succeed without being a part of a team with the boards and the PEC. The RFM stands as a partial document in need of an equal commitment on the part of the boards, PECs and general members of our provinces to support an environment that is conducive to ministry. Without such a mutual covenant, the RFM is just a “policy.”

Keith Weatherman

I considered going into the ministry many years ago. I was a high school student and I really had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. When I investigated through the

I respect the PECs for attempting to make abundantly clear what has always been expected of ministers, but in the past these expectations have been clearly conveyed by seminary teachers, bishops, and collegial mentors. What has changed in our network of relational ministry to now make these “lived norms” into a “policy”? Is it assumed that these expectations will be more readily a part of a minister’s behavior by doing so? Is it also possible that this behavior cannot be taught but must be caught, which will require a lot more relational connection between PECs, bishops, seminary teachers and ministers?

The reality is that the well-being and wholeness of clergy in the Moravian Church seems to be at great risk, which is demonstrated by the number of pastorates that were terminated in the last year by the PECs. This certainly cannot be blamed on one party, but is likely a combination of factors present in our society and the church. What is needed, however, is a different approach to leadership than policy statements – something that is more relationally based, direct and reflective of the Body of Christ.

Dr. Neil Routh is the pastor of Christ Moravian Church in Winston-Salem.

Church, seeking answers, I was discouraged from the notion. I was told that I would have to be certain that I had been “touched on the

shoulder.” How was I to be certain? Basically I was told to “Leave it alone; if it is a calling you will know.” I never did figure out whether or not it was a real calling.

As I read this document I try to place myself back in time as I was struggling with those notions of possibly being called into the ministry. I don't feel that these expectations are very encouraging. I still feel that the calling isn't really determined by the candidate and the Lord, but it is determined by a group of professionals entitled the Provincial Elders Conference. I understand that ministerial candidates need guidance and encouragement, and maybe they should be questioned about their willingness to dedicate their life to Church service. However, the emphasis that is placed on the negatives of being uprooted and being sent from one place to another is exactly the type of wording that kept me from at least trying the process. Instead, I joined the U.S. Army.

We understand that the calling could take us to a ministry anywhere, but whose calling is it, the Lord's or the PEC's? I get mixed messages when I read about being uprooted, yet I see ministers who serve the same congregations for decades. I write this not as a professional ecclesiastical person; however, I have served on the board during our past three call situations. I am speaking to the “Call Process” as an experienced lay person, from a realistic point of view.

The actual “Call Process” involving the filling of a vacancy of a church is a very interesting and confusing process. **This is how it is supposed to work:** The “Call Process”

begins with the Elders taking a snapshot of the church. This snapshot describes to the PEC the strengths and weaknesses of our congregation, from a physical and spiritual perspective. The description tries to explain the congregation's purpose and vision.

The PEC meets with the Church Board, gets a better feel of the particular situation, and explains the “Call Process.” Emphasis is placed on the need for confidentiality and prayer. The Board does what it takes to keep the church programs going while awaiting the presentation of candidates for the vacancy. The Board through prayer and discussion trusts the process and within a few months a new pastor is called. The pastor is invited to a Board meeting where the members get to meet the new pastor. Technically the pastor and the board can decide to withdraw the “Call” if somehow during the meeting it is determined that there will not be a good fit. This should rarely happen.

What really happens: As soon as the congregation learns that they are losing it's pastor the board begins meeting. The board members start asking questions of one another. Who is available? Who do we want? Rev. Doe would never leave “Our Lady of Salem.” He has been there so many years. We cannot afford him, can we? What ever happened to Rev. Hussendorf?

Would they agree to come here since we have a parsonage? Will you talk to your connections and find out what you can about Rev. Buninmug? They won't try to stick us with one of those liberals, will they?

We rumble on about how there are ministers out there who are untouchable. Why do we have to go through the “Call Process” every six years while some pastors remain in their churches for decades? Is it a matter of ministry, or economics? We as a board know what type of minister would work for us, but is that type available? Does he or she exist?

Those questions and more are asked and acted upon. We as a board know that the process is supposed to be done with guidance from above, but we also know that sometimes our fate is in our own hands. Sometimes we don't even trust the process. It could be that we really don't want to acknowledge what it is that we are really after. Sometimes we say that we want a “leader” and we want to grow; however, the reality is that we want a “follower” who will do things the way we want them to be done. Sometimes we would rather not grow if it means we are going to have to expand our “comfort zone”. Although it is not part of the process, the Board is diligently finding out all that can be found out about all the available ministers as well as all the possible available ministers. We know whom we think would be a good fit and who wouldn't before any names are presented to the church by the P.E.C.

We use the term “Call” as a spiritual communication between the Lord and a Person, however the rules and processes that

are set up are too rigid and impractical because someone else is trying to either interpret, or force the “the Call Process” for whatever needs it sees fit.

I strongly believe that there should be an interview process that is set up before the actual call is made. It is unfortunate for both parties to have a call issued; a meeting with the board and pastor take place, then for the board to change its mind after the meeting. Actually the call is rescinded. That can and does happen, and it is embarrassing and hurtful to all involved.

I have seen the process work, and I have seen the process fail. The “Call Process” depends on trust. We have to trust ourselves as a board and congregation to determine very honestly where we want to go and exactly what type of shepherd we want. We have to trust the PEC to give us the attention we need, no matter how small we are, and to really understand our congregation. We have to trust the Lord. It is for his purpose we serve, and if we do not trust him to guide us through this process, then why do we bother to have a church?

Keith Weatherman is Associate Director of Patient Finance at Baptist Hospital and an Elder of Hope Moravian Church.

Robert Rierson

Ordination is not a sacrament of the church but it is a rite, just as confirmation and marriage are rites of the church. Although it is a rite and not a sacrament, we believe that the grace of God is administered by our bishops to the candidate for ordination, to the gathered congregation, and, indeed, upon the whole church. It is a rite that only our bishops conduct, recognizing that its specialness reaches beyond even that in marriage. The service of marriage states, “is to be held in honor among all people,” and entered into reverently and discreetly. Wouldn’t you think this would be more so with ordination, otherwise why is it done so only by a bishop?

It helps me to recall the incident with the resurrected Christ and his disciples by the Sea of Galilee where Christ repeatedly asked Peter if he loved him and then exhorted him to “Feed my lambs.” “Tend my sheep.” “Feed my sheep.” From this was born an apostolic significance, a passing on of responsibility to the apostles and a preparation for the coming of Pentecost. It is out of this kind of context that ministry was born. Out of this context, responsibility for the revelation of God was to continue. Out of this kind of context, the church, embryonic as it may have been, was called forth and into being.

One might see Church and ministry as being a part of the same calling, intricately bound up together and suggesting, at least, that those who are responsible for ministry are definitely linked to the primary reason for the church’s being. In Acts 6 when those chosen

to a special ministry, including Stephen, were called together, the Apostles prayed and laid their hands upon them to convey the Spirit upon them for the ministry they were called to do. As I read it, the emphasis was placed upon their calling and election, and they were given the blessing as a type of ordination. Stephen lost his life over it. They were people of faith and in good standing, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Their assignment was an extension of the church that was an extension of the Christ. A holy order was ordained.

The reason I am writing this is not because I know anything, but because the institutional church seems to be diminishing the ordination of clergy. The emphasis seems to be on the clergy persons and their fitness for ministry rather than on the call from God to do God’s bidding in this world. When the institutional church becomes self-protective and enters a survival mode, the emphasis shifts from God’s involvement and revelation to an institutional defensiveness of the church based on behavior of the clergy. It is true, however, that if the clergy do not live up to calling of God than the church suffers. It suffers through disappointment, embarrassment, and guilt. The emphasis shifts from proclaiming the good news to explaining the bad news and attempting to avoid anything so embarrassing ever happening again.

The laity love this because it takes the heat off of them and off their lack of response to the Gospel. The clergy then hunker down and try not to poke their heads up so high as to

draw fire. “Let me do what I can do just to get by.” In such a “gamy” setting such attitudes are bred. The honor of the mystery of divine guidance is lost when clergy are perceived to have little to do with the direction of the church and of God’s intervention into church life through the order of priest. We might as well throw away our surplices, or any vestige thereof “on behalf of” priestly function and ambassadorship. We have accepted the cultural norms for ministers and the concepts of religious gurus, prayer makers, and preachers who spew out what people wish to hear. Anybody who can read today can be a Pope, the final authority, and the louder you speak and the more you speak with a saucy passion and with the implication of sincerity, you qualify as a heavenly being. Why would you need ordination?

I read the article entitled *Expectations of the Provincial Elders’ Conferences, North and South, To Insure Readiness for Ordination* with some disillusionment. Understanding that this article is listed as “Expectation” of the Provincial Elders’ Conferences, it comes across as a personnel document, with emphasis on the clergy and a didactic fervor to bring and keep the clergy in line. This is not presented in the context of the Church’s ministry handed over to us by the Christ who called the Church into being. This is not to say that what is written in this document is wrong; it is just not right. It reads like a “must do” list; hardly inspiring, and it gives no context for ministry. How does the Church come to have ordination? Is it just a means of getting the job done or is there some divine activity involved?

We are in the post-modern world and many would take issue with this statement. If by “pastoring” it is meant visiting the sick and sitting at the hospital for long periods of time, counseling people with personal problems, etc., “pastoring” does not get it. Leadership training and mentoring the laity in their ministries of “pastoring” and caring would be a better place for emphasis. Think about a pastor running a training center or seminary for the laity in a congregation and you come near to the idea of transformational ministry.

Here is a list of the “must do” admonitions I found in this document:

- “must possess a vital and living relationship with Jesus Christ, and exhibit a sense of call;”
- must possess a servant attitude
- must be willing to consider any call to ordained service
- under compulsion to follow the Lord’s leading and to go wherever the Lord calls
- It is a demand, for which there is no compromise, that the ordained servant of Christ keeps an open mind and spirit toward this concept of pilgrimage
- must possess a spirit of genuine humility
- must understand that service is under the authority of Christ
- must recognize that they are accountable to God, self and others
- It is imperative that candidates ...care for their own personal faith in Christ
- will be expected to serve as an example of Christian living
- must exhibit a readiness to minister in a variety of ways

- must be prepared to lead worship
- Must possess a basic understanding of the distinctiveness of Moravian liturgics
- must possess a thorough understanding of scripture, theology and history
- must understand that in the Moravian context, the work of the parish is centered in the foundational work of ‘pastoring’
- must understand that they are called to be individuals who are self aware
- must be prepared to live by the rule and authority of scripture
- must have a clear understanding of Biblical leadership
- should be persons who can demonstrate creativity, imagination
- must be well versed in the scriptural understanding of spiritual gifts and must be equipped to teach
- must be prepared to exercise basic administrative and organizational skills
- must be self-starters and self-finishers (What is a self-finisher? Does that mean you do yourself in?)
- must understand clearly that they serve our Chief Elder through
- must understand that they serve under authority and are accountable for their work to the local church and to the PECs
- must understand that they are to be respectful of authority
- must be willing to be a part of the Moravian Church they serve

All that wears me out. There is nothing untrue about all this or the whole statement; it just gives the wrong impression. If I were a candidate for ordination and was given this

document as a means of preparation for my ordination, I would probably hang it up before I began. What is it that bothers me so about this document?

As I look back over my years of ministry, I think that I understood all of these “musts” but there seemed to be so much more to what I did and am than all these “expectations.” I would hate to think that my ordination was reduced to such “musts.” Think of the images that go through your head when you think of the ordained ministry: an embrace of God, the beckoning of Christ, the advocacy of Christ, the whispering of the Holy Spirit to one devoted to spiritual thought and theology, continuing the legacy of ministry that has been given for centuries, the priestly functions on behalf of God, and the support and acknowledgement of the church as being set apart for ministry.

This listing of Expectations is like thinking of the Ten Commandments as the law, but the law is the Torah. It is a record of the interactions of God with a people who were sent on journeys and who became part of stories, visions, conversations, divine actions, miracles and outrageous visitations. Ordination also seems to be so much more than a list of expectations for the clergy where restrictions seem to be greater than purpose. It’s time to talk about the meaning of ordination.

Rev. Robert Rierson is Director of Evangelism and Homeland Ministries for the Southern Province.

Kay Ward

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to *Expectations To Insure Readiness for Ordination*. The entire article deserves attention but I will respond to only one of the sections, primarily because it addresses many of the issues and concerns that I experience as I travel around the country speaking to folks who are wrestling with a call to ministry.

The “Spiritual Expectations” paragraphs make explicit what has often been unspoken, or at best carried along in the oral tradition of our denomination. Most folks speak easily of a relationship with Jesus Christ and many will use serving language to describe their call, but that service is often understood in a very narrow pastoral or geographic sense; i.e. “a teaching ministry in our congregation” or “becoming a chaplain in a nearby hospital.”

The pilgrim language of these paragraphs does not play well in our culture. Being willing to consider any call to ordained service throughout the Moravian Unity is service on a very grand scale. In a culture that appears to be more mobile than ever, we may have become less willing to see ourselves serving outside of a small regional area. Communication and transportation connects us globally but geographically, we are becoming less willing to move out of our familiar regions.

When I am sitting in someone’s living room, the conversation often goes like this:

“I have always felt called. I didn’t respond to the call before. I fell in love - moved into another kind of vocation - had children. But now I am feeling that call more urgently and I think God wants me to be an ordained minister

in the Moravian Church. I am very active in my congregation - I am there every time the door opens.”

Have you tested out that call in the congregation?

“People say they always thought I should be a minister. The pastor has been very encouraging. But I don’t really see myself leaving this community. My husband/wife has a business here - my children wouldn’t want to move - my parents are elderly - we own a house. So I have looked into getting my seminary degree on-line - by extension - in a nearby city.

Have you considered Moravian Seminary?

“Not really - it’s too far away. And I would hate to burn my bridges here at home because I see myself serving the church here in this community. I don’t really feel called to serve anywhere else. I trust that God will work this out - if I am meant to be in ministry, the district board (PEC) will find a way for me to serve here. God wouldn’t ask me to jeopardize my family.”

Two things are apparent to me from these conversations:

1. as a denomination, we have failed to be clear about the call to ministry - how it works and how we believe that God works. Every person that I talk to eagerly points to Clergy X who has done what they intend to do. They earned an M.Div., were ordained and have continued to serve in Moravian congregations without ever leaving their home. Pilgrim language is not persuasive because it is so out of context. We seldom speak of it. It may be

a generational thing. I think there was a time when everyone understood that responding to God's call to serve the church could mean that your children would not be with their grandparents on Christmas morning. Aunts and uncles would not be there to attend junior's baseball games. Cousins would not endure their cousin's piano recitals. It was understood. Folks knew that sometimes, in fact, you might be called to a church that was near the family home ground, but those occasions would be rare.

2. as a denomination, we have failed to be imaginative and consistent in our encouragement and blessing of lay ministry so that many folks who express being called to the ordained ministry are really being called to lay ministry but don't feel any acceptance

of such a ministry. About half the people I speak with, I think, are being called to a new kind of leadership within their congregation and are desperate for training and affirmation from their church.

This document will be a helpful resource as the church continues to encourage and assess those who are feeling called to the ordained ministry. If this is a work still in progress, I would encourage the writers to include some call to peace and justice issues, to more explicit evangelism and to the prophetic nature of the ordained ministry.

The Rt. Rev. Kay Ward is Director of Development for Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem.

Reply

Betsy Reed Bombick

I first want to say "thank you" to each of the respondents for their review and comments on the "Expectations of the Provincial Elders' Conferences, North and South to Insure Readiness for Ordination" (RFO) document. While reading your thoughts I was reminded of the old parable about the 6 blind mice each trying to describe an elephant. We each have our perspectives that arise from our individual experiences, and the whole is much greater than the mere sum of the parts

(sounds like confessional 'government!'). Your perspective and contributions are most helpful.

First let me be clear: I am not "officially" responding on behalf of the PECs; I am responding as an individual who is serving on the PEC (Southern Province). These are my personal reactions to your responses. I won't be able to address every point or issue raised here, although I will cover as

much as I can. I want to say upfront that I don't see this document as a "policy" set in stone, or as a "done deal" but as an interactive tool, a process, and a living document that we can use to inform us all as we work together to develop and support candidates for ordained ministry. I'll first make some general comments, then specifically address each respondent.

The impetus for this document came from ongoing PEC discussions about the candidacy process, "readiness" for ordination, and oversight of the call process and pastors. Those discussions frequently arise both out of looking at the "big picture" (what is our theological understanding of our practices?) and looking at specific situations (what is working well, what is not working well, what could be improved upon?). It is our hope that this document (or a future version of it) might be helpful to individuals discerning the nature of a call, to candidates preparing for ministry, and to those who help prepare candidates for ministry (seminaries, congregations, pastors, teachers, etc). We began by asking ourselves some questions: what skills, abilities and gifts would be helpful or "ideal" for someone beginning parish ministry? What personal qualifications, characteristics, and practices enhance/enable an ordained minister to serve effectively? Another way to look at it is this: you are a member of a church board ready to issue a call to someone who has completed all the requirements for ordination. What are your "expectations" of that soon-to-be ordained minister? As a result of our

discussion and reflection, we came up with expectations in four major areas: spiritual, pastoral, leadership, and denominational. The Southern and Northern PECs reviewed, revised, and adopted this document. I want to stress this next statement: **it doesn't end here.** This document may serve as a foundation for PEC, for candidates, for seminary faculty, etc to then ask the following question: "what kinds of education and experiences will provide candidates with the opportunity for growth in these areas?"

A lot of these "expectations" are "no-brainers," as some of you point out. I would invite you to think about our context today: what would lead the PECs to think that this document would be helpful or even necessary at this time in the life of our denomination? What is changing in our church, in our culture, that prompts these discussions? I would invite you to follow Neil Routh's lead and access the Alban Institute website (www.alban.org), specifically the lead editorial for the September/October 2001 issue on leadership. The Moravian Church is not alone in facing challenges today

My own assessment of this document at this point in time (having had the benefit of reading and thinking about these responses!) is that it provides a solid framework for discussion, with room for improvement. I look forward to working with the PECs to address some of the concerns raised in this Hinge.

Of course no one individual will meet all these "expectations" equally well. Some

individuals are more detailed oriented than others. Some individuals are more gregarious than others. Some will enjoy administrative tasks while others will see them as at best necessary drains on their time and energy. Some individuals are visionary, while others are more grounded in the immediate present. These expectations are meant to be more of a goal than of a standard. And we do need to be mindful that none of us are “finished products”—we are all “works in progress”, developing in maturity in Christ. (Thanks to Barbara for making this point).

As I read through your responses, I had several reactions, including the following:

“Yes, that’s what we were trying to express, and it sounds as if it came across clearly. Good!”

“That’s true—that’s not addressed adequately (or at all!) in this document.”

“That’s a good point/very important issue—which I think is beyond the scope of this particular document.”

“Ouch!”

“What??”

“No, that’s not what I think we meant to convey—does that need to be said differently?”

A few “common themes” really jumped out at me. Some of you commented on the section of the Document that talks about “minister as pilgrim.” Most of it is taken directly from The Book of Order of the Moravian Church in America, Southern Province. The language in that section is

somber and perhaps somewhat ponderous. The reality today is that many clergy are in situations that make it difficult and/or painful to move, and that accepting some calls may involve significant sacrifice (personal, financial, etc) on the part of the pastor and her/his family. However—the reality also is that the church is asking the ordained pastor to “keep an open mind and spirit toward this concept of pilgrimage”. The church asks that each call be received and approached with careful deliberation and prayer, no matter how significant the obstacles to accepting that call. I do think it is important to be clear here: I don’t assume that a pastor “should” or will accept any call to ordained service throughout the Moravian Unity, but I think that it is crucial that an ordained minister be willing to consider any such call. From my perspective as a PEC member, I can assure you that calls are not issued lightly. PEC members know that each call issued has significant ramifications for many people. PEC considers the congregation’s needs and the specific gifts and abilities that a pastor brings, and tries not to hinder the work of the Spirit.

Some of you raised questions about the context or the bigger picture. Bob reminds us of the theological framework in which we work, beginning with the Scriptural context for ministry and stating that “it’s time to talk about the meaning of ordination.” Neil discusses some of the context in which clergy serve today, and emphasizes the crucial importance of covenantal relationships between PEC and candidates/clergy, and clergy and boards. These

contextual matters are extremely important to our understanding of “where we come from” and “where we are”.

And more than a couple raised questions about the tone—this document came across as a “personnel policy” or statement. That’s an interesting observation that deserves more attention and consideration. PECs are called to provide leadership and oversight of the provinces between synod. There’s much discussion today in the business world of the differences between “management” and “leadership.” Both are necessary; it’s important to find the best balance between the two, as well as finding the appropriate balance between being “reactive” and “proactive.” I believe this document is an attempt to be proactive in providing a clear description of characteristics that serve one well in ministry. At the same time, I do see how it can come across as a “management policy” more than it does a leadership vision. From that perspective, too, I think it bears a closer look by the PECs.

Now for some specific reactions to each of you individually:

Response to Barbara: Your reflections on your experience as a seminary student/new candidate were helpful, and I agree wholeheartedly with your comments about the necessity of the “whole process of education and experience.” This was one place where I wondered if the document needed to be more specific—the intent of the document is to provide a ‘snapshot’ of what the individual

might look like after having had that “whole process of education and experience,” not to describe a new candidate. What jumped out at me most of all from your comments was the concept of joy. You state “It’s hard to find a sense of joy in these paragraphs,” and your ending paragraph beautifully lifts up the spiritual expectation of joy. While I think some of that is assumed in the document when it describes a “vital and living relationship with Jesus Christ,” you state it much more directly and eloquently. You also stress the importance of growth. I agree wholeheartedly. Thank you for your emphasis on loving guidance and direction.

Response to Will: Will also points out something that is missing in this document: an emphasis on evangelism and outreach. This comment especially resonated with me: “Let’s expect those who believe they are called of the Lord to demonstrate that they know that the Lord calls his people to minister to the world and to reach the lost.” AMEN, Will! You also raise the issue of “maintenance ministry,” something we were trying to get at under “Leadership Expectations” when we describe pastoral leaders as “called by Christ to move beyond the status quo,” who can “inspire and challenge congregations to move forward and find their vision.” It sounds as if this is lost amidst all the other expectations discussed in this document.

Response to Hilda: Hilda, you distill all these words into a simple, deep phrase: “unite in service, go to the world, and love one another.” I like your point that “good

leadership skills build trust.” The opposite is certainly true—it’s difficult to trust a pastor who fails to follow through, who takes too much on (doesn’t delegate), who doesn’t communicate well, who is consistently late to appointments or meetings. These sometimes seem like small details, but they can get in the way of a pastor’s ability to minister effectively. You also capture well the discernment process involved in ‘testing’ a call: “deeper insights come when individuals listen to other believers and examine personal beliefs.” That is clearly one of our hopes for this document.

Response to Neil: Neil points out the exclusive focus of the document on the candidate, rather than on the relationship/covenant between candidate & PEC and others, i.e., educators, church boards, congregations, etc. The focus was intentional. With that in mind, it is crucial to affirm that this document and these expectations are not the whole story by any means. We want to see the whole forest, as well as the trees! We do affirm a covenantal relationship, represented in part by the covenant signed by candidates and the PEC, and in part by the liturgy for service of ordination. Your comments reflect a question that is crucial to the church. “...in the past these expectations have been clearly conveyed by seminary teachers, bishops, and collegial mentors. What has changed in our network of relational ministry to now make these “lived norms” into a “policy”? I agree wholeheartedly with your emphasis on the importance of relational connections.

Response to Keith: Keith’s comments are more focused on the steps beyond candidacy and ‘readiness for ordination’ rather than on the individual candidate/clergy. The issue of trust that you raise is pivotal. The process begins to break down without trust, without faith, hope and love. Without the belief that the Lord is indeed at work through our call processes (and without our doing everything we can to not get in the way), the process becomes a sham, a game of strategy.

I am troubled that you feel that “the calling isn’t really determined by the candidate and the Lord, but it is determined by a group of professionals entitled the Provincial Elders Conference.” That’s a point where there needs to be open discussion, reflection, and prayer. It’s not the intent of the PEC to determine the call, but rather to assist the candidate and the church in the discernment process of testing and understanding the nature of the call.

Bob Rierson: Bob begins by laying out the context in which we serve. I’m grateful for Bob’s “big picture” view, and for calling us to give attention to the foundation beneath us. Bob, you suggest that the institutional church seems to be emphasizing clergy persons & their fitness for ministry rather than the call from God—and this document has a similar bias. You are correct—there are a lot of “musts” in this document, and perhaps we need to look at our language! I don’t mean to play editorial games, however. Rather than a list of “musts,” I see these as a list of characteristics,

or skills, abilities, and gifts that will enhance the ordained person's ministry.

Kay Ward: Perhaps Kay felt the same frustration I have had: there's so much here to discuss! I appreciate her focus on the "Spiritual Expectations" and her calling the Moravian church to task. Many of us feel a "call to ministry"—and we need the support and wisdom of the Christian community to discern faithfully what form that ministry might take. (This is where small groups and spiritual gifts discernment can be so helpful). You also point out a few things lacking in the document: any emphasis on peace and justice issues, explicit evangelism, and the prophetic nature of the ordained ministry. Peace/justice, evangelism, and the prophetic role: these are serious matters that deserve the church's attention. I also found your comments about "pilgrim language" to be helpful.

Finally, several of you raised critical questions which are beyond the scope of the "Readiness for Ordination" document. What is the nature of a call? How do we discern whether a call is to the ordained ministry or to some form of lay ministry? What is our theological understanding of, basis for ordination? What can ordained ministers ideally expect from the PEC, from the church board, from the congregation? What is the nature of the relationship between us? What are the

discrepancies between the way the call process is "supposed" to work out versus how it may work out in reality, and how do we address those discrepancies? Some of these questions go right to the heart of our confessional system, which is very different from other denominations around us. I think these are all part of the discussions that should take place during the entire candidacy process—and far beyond. Sometimes it's easier to focus on the 'tasks' before us, and not spend enough time discussing the context, the big picture, the deeper questions. How do we make those kinds of discussions possible? I think it is up to all of us—PEC, candidates, clergy, laity, educators, etc, to raise these questions. During the last weekend of 2002 Southern Province PEC members and approved candidates met for a retreat at Laurel Ridge. Time was spent getting to know each other better and having substantive discussions about many aspects of ministry. PEC members and students who were able to be there gave up some precious family time over the Christmas holidays for very helpful and productive conversation. More of these kinds of opportunities would be welcome and encouraged.

Betsy Reed Bombick is a member of Home Moravian Church and is serving a second term on the PEC, South.

Featured Sermon

This is a new feature of the Hinge. If you have a sermon that you would like to present before a larger Moravian audience, please do so.

Simple Prosperity
Thanksgiving 2002
Roma Combs

Let us pray. Father, I come to you in all humility and reverence. I come as one of your servants to thank you for your presence. I ask your blessing on us as we gather for worship and your guidance as we scatter to live in faith. Help us to live without prejudice or hypocrisy and prepare us for gentle acts of kindness and love toward your majestic creation. If freedom, justice, peace and simple prosperity is your will, equip us with righteousness for your sake and for our salvation. Amen.

Miles Standish must have thought that he was the luckiest man alive. The Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock had just finished the worst year imaginable. Only 50 of their band of 102 settlers had survived. Without the help of their Native American neighbors, they all would have perished. In October of 1621, after an abundant harvest, those fortunate few survivors shared a thanksgiving feast with their friends. That act of thanksgiving celebrated their simple prosperity and deliverance. We commemorate their courage and triumph tomorrow with a feast of our own.

Today, I am the luckiest man alive. I have so many blessings to be thankful for. I am thankful for a faith in the Lord that has been forged in a lifetime spiritual journey. I am thankful for this great nation we all cherish. I am thankful for Sunnyside Ministry and the hope Christ's presence there brings to desperate people. I am thankful for what this community contributes to meet the ever-increasing needs presented by those who seek help. I am thankful for the volunteers who sacrificially give of their time to do the work in service for the less fortunate. But most of all I am thankful for tomorrow. Tomorrow, I will be surrounded by the people I love most dearly, my family. Without the love and support of my family, life would be meaningless. My wife of nearly 40 years means the world to me. My three children and their spouses are a continuous source of joy for me. My five grandchildren are a world of delight. The love they have for me and the love I have for them and the love they have for each other and the love they have for all of God's creation is the purest reason for my very being. I will enjoy every minute of thanksgiving and I can't wait for the sight, sound, smell and touch of it.

But having said all that, my heart has never been so close to breaking. There are millions of people all over the world who, because of hunger, sickness, homelessness, slavery and all manner of desperation and hopelessness will never see the joy of the justice all human beings long for. The sadness I feel is for them and their families.

You see I like to think that I am a person of good intent. But I feel really threatened by the evil I see all around me. I know that evil is real. Terrorism fomented by all kinds of fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction in the wrong hands, sniper killings in the heart of our country, the abuse of women and children, the abuse of drugs, crime in the street and in the board room and everywhere in between, genocide, bigotry, hatred, war and all manner of injustice seem to be the norm for early 21st century experience. More and more of my resources are poured into the struggle against my enemies. My victories are overshadowed by the losses as the body count rises. The economy, my government and my institutions are braced against the next assault. How am I to deal with such chaos?

I cannot help but feel personally threatened by the terror of it all. The anxiety caused by the fears generated by these real dangers has sent me rushing to the edge of an abyss. I stare into the void and shudder. I have lost all sense of good judgment by what I perceive there. My uncertainties are so great that I fail to recognize that what I fear most is only the reflection of my primal need for my own personal security and salvation.

This malevolence is magnified when I increase the tension by looking for someone to blame for the unease caused by the fear I have of an unknown future. My fears drive me to protect myself with all the power at my disposal. This is why I must lay aside hard earned freedoms at security checkpoints. I must protect my nation, my institutions, my doctrine, my family and myself. My only patriotic duty seems to be an awful conflict in defense of my own personal security. Is the day coming when I must exorcize my fear by exercising my power and desire to destroy my enemies by armed might without a thought for the innocent among them? When indiscriminant destruction and death is the only option I can accept, then the beast in that abyss has finally won the battle between good and evil!

But No No No! I will not choose destruction! I will not choose death! I will not be afraid! Because the Lord has promised us that we do have the strength to face this fear and turn away from this precipice of terror. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

Freedom, justice, peace and simple prosperity is what we must give thanks for. That is our heritage and that must be our legacy to the world. The Lord said set my people free. We must trust freedom. The Lord said he wanted to see a mighty flood of justice, a torrent of doing good. We must do justice. The Lord said blessed are the peacemakers. We must seek peace. The Lord saves us for the transforming work that we can do in his name. We must transform humanity for the sake of simple prosperity.

Simple prosperity is crucial in ending the cycle of violent destruction we seem trapped in. Poverty is the major cause for hunger, sickness, hopelessness, outrage and violence. Simple prosperity is the cure. Simple prosperity was present for a while in the Garden of Eden. The early Christians lived it. The Pilgrims celebrated it. Simple prosperity means that families are able to feed, clothe, shelter and care for themselves in peace and harmony. We should use our abundance to end the scarcity. We should help achieve this prosperity by supporting those who seek freedom, justice and peace wherever and whoever they may be. If we do that we will bind their hope to our thanksgiving. The world will simply be a safer place for us all.

We will walk out that door into a world full of injustice, self-righteousness, violence, and hatred. In that world we must search for justice, righteousness, peace and love. We will find many others who want the same kind of world we seek. We will help find simple prosperity for all who seek it. We will not be afraid! We will not destroy! We will not loose the beast!

We will walk out that door and try to live our lives as an example of the humility that is born of true wisdom, is pure, peace-loving, gentle, approachable, full of tolerant thought and kindly action, with no breath of favoritism or hint of hypocrisy. For the wisest of people are peacemakers who go about quietly sowing for a harvest of righteousness which should be gathered in themselves and others.

Because the “ Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness is to all generations.” Thanks be to God.

Roma Combs is Director of Sunnyside Ministries, a mission of the Southern Province in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Letters to the Editor

The recent editorial by Craig Atwood in *The Hinge* struck a chord with me regarding the reluctance of Moravians to discuss and attempt to resolve conflict. As a lay person, I will try to tread lightly with this letter amidst the offerings in this journal from more august and educated scribes.

I admit that my opinions are not typically Moravian due to my comparatively eclectic theological experiences. During my career, I worked for many years for church-related colleges and universities, including United Methodist, Lutheran, United Church of Christ and Roman Catholic institutions. One of my assignments was to handle all publicity, media relations and external communications as three Lutheran synods in Wisconsin merged into one. My professional experiences showed me the constant conflicts and debates which occur in the various denominations.

My exposure to religious strife began many years before adulthood, however. My father was a Protestant. My mother was a Catholic. She made sure we attended St. Patrick of Heatherdowns Church as children. My parents and their families often debated religion loudly, heatedly and boisterously.

The lovely spring day in the year of 1955 that the good Fathers Frank Brogan and Francis O'Brien (may the Lord grant these well intentioned Irishmen eternal peace) visited our brand new home and dumped holy water on the living room floor to bless the house was a benchmark in my young religious life. My mother the Catholic approved. My Protestant father was outraged. This prompted an Irish uprising involving all parties the likes of which most Moravians will never witness and probably cannot imagine.

This brings me to a major point. I believe that Moravians have extreme difficulty with theological conflict because most of them have never truly experienced it. As much as I love the Moravian Church, I must admit that it is quite isolated from other denominations and singularly set in its ways. Perhaps our insular nature may keep us from learning from other Christian sects about how they attempt to handle conflict creatively.

An illustration of our comparative isolation is the scores of times Moravians have said to me "Lutherans believe this about that" or "Catholics believe that about this." The very construct of such statements shows them to be indigenously false. Most Moravians do not understand that the majority of denominations are not nearly as homogenous as ours historically has been.

The only true statement would be "The official doctrine or position of the Lutheran Church (or whatever denomination) on this matter is such-and-such." Since the major churches number their membership in the millions and their congregations in the thousands in the United States

alone, there is often an enormous difference in official church position and what various members actually believe, leading to frequent conflict and ongoing debate.

One need look no further than the Roman church's official position on birth control vis-à-vis the actual practices of most American Catholics to view this schism. The Catholic Church is not alone, though. During my career, I personally knew Lutheran ministers who were gay, United Methodist ministers who did not necessarily believe in eternal damnation within the context of God's infinite love and mercy, and an United Church of Christ clergy member who was significantly bothered by factual conflicts in accounts of Jesus' life as recounted in the Bible.

Another rather idiosyncratic situation in the Moravian Church which may keep us from facing conflict is our somewhat limited view of history. Perhaps we Moravians do not have a clear concept of how much societal changes inevitably influence the evolution of Christian denominations.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the Protestant Reformation was as much a product of its times as it was an influence on its era and beyond. The Moravian view seems to be that Martin Luther and his contemporaries were divinely inspired men who spontaneously were called to lead the world from darkness. While I certainly subscribe to a great deal of this view, it is also obvious that the times were right for their work and the religious reformers were part of the beginning of a human tidal wave of changes in the arts, sciences, medicine and virtually all other fields of endeavor.

Let me hasten to add that this does not diminish in any way from the inspired, divine nature of the work of Luther, Hus and other reformers. It also can be viewed as consistent with God's mysterious and wonderful plans in that the Almighty created the reformers to live when they did. The fact that these Christians were influenced by their evolving societies, however, is unmistakable.

Another more controversial but also somewhat humorous reason why our denomination has trouble with conflict is that Moravians can be as intransigent on certain issues as any other Christian group. It is humorous in the sense that Moravians are admittedly very traditional and conservative even to the point that we poke fun at ourselves upon occasion. It is a serious issue in another sense because we simply do not handle change and controversy well.

For example, female pastors have found rough sledding in several Southern Province churches even in very recent months and years with many church members simply not ready or willing to accept female leadership. I have seen the same attitudes toward male pastors who are duly ordained by the Moravian Church but have earlier religious backgrounds with denominations which many Moravian congregation members do not understand or accept.

Similarly, our full communion relationship with the Lutheran Church is not necessarily a functioning reality. There seems to be a negative inertia among rank and file Moravians in regard to inviting Lutheran ministers to stage joint communion celebrations in our congregations. In spite of our extreme shortage of pastors, it would not appear there is a ground swell of support to call ministers from other, “approved” denominations to our pulpits.

Moravians are certainly not alone in their hesitancy and uncertainty regarding theological change and doctrinal diversity. Even the largest denominations find themselves in much the same position.

In his 1997 book “Nearer My God,” William F. Buckley, Jr., describes a forum of Roman Catholic clergy and others he assembled to discuss conflicts within that denomination regarding celibacy for priests, birth control, the ordination of females, divorce and other thorny issues.

The commentary regarding these discussions sounds uncannily and stunningly similar to the rhetoric heard in the Moravian Church today. The “bottom line” is that even the most conservative Catholic clergy and laypersons know that change might occur, but they want to be sure any change is scriptural and truly the Will of God. They doubly want to make sure changes are not made merely to bow to contemporary pressures or as the result of fatigue over turmoil and strident conflicts.

I emphasize that my remarks are not intended to be unfairly harsh regarding the Moravian denomination, nor are they suggestions for any specific reforms we might adopt. They also are not endorsements of the practices of any other Christian organization. They are, however, intended to note that other denominations of all ilk are currently engaged in similar struggles. Many have faced these challenges for centuries and have learned to survive and even thrive amidst repeated cycles of seemingly overwhelming criticism and conflict.

My only suggestion would be that perhaps one of the most important steps for the Moravian Church would be to look beyond itself. There might be much to be learned from and much to be taught to our Christian brothers and sisters from other denominations.

In the end, we will one day all be united as one, anyway. We might as well start the work now and fulfill God’s will by growing in love and unity.

Rick Cochran
Pfafftown, NC

Rick Cochran has been a member of Calvary Moravian Church for nearly ten years, is a former member and chair of its board of trustees and has served briefly several times in the mission field in Honduras.

Subscription form:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Country: _____

Check all that apply:

New subscription _____ Renewal _____ New Address _____

Clergy _____ Lay _____ Seminary Student _____

Return with check to:

Business Manager
The Hinge
P. O. Box 24924
Winston-Salem, NC 27114-4924

Editorial Board:

Sherry Mason Brown
Otto Dreydoppel David Fischler
Judith Justice Margaret Leinbach
David Marcus Graham Rights

Business Managers:

Jane Burcaw and Melissa Hall

Editor:

Craig D. Atwood

Correspondence regarding address changes should be directed to:

Jane Burcaw
Moravian Theological Seminary
1200 Main Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018

Other correspondence should be sent to the editor:

Craig Atwood
2444 Ardmore Manor Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27103
or Zinzendorf2002@yahoo.com