

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.

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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