

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