

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 confessional 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 confessional 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