

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.

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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?

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