



August 19, 2011

A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Northern and Southern Provinces to our Congregations:

As Bishops of the Moravian Unity residing in the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in America we greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Chief Elder. We have had the blessing of spending August 18-21, 2011 in conference at Laurel Ridge in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. This time has brought us closer to one another, and allows us to recommit ourselves to our calling as Bishops. Ours is a ministry of reconciliation.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed and as he gathered in the Upper Room with his disciples he prayed: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-21) We believe that this is Jesus' prayer for us in these days as well.

What does it mean for us to be "one" when we live in a world of competing interests, values, and points of view?

As Bishops we have prayed and discussed issues of deep concern to our church and the world. Recognizing our own diversity we have come together in love and mutual respect for one another because we find common ground in our commitment to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and in our love and commitment to the Moravian Church. We believe the Moravian Church can model a way of being that does not yield to the pressures of polarization and fragmentation so evident in our world today.

Rather than allowing points of doctrine to create division, we affirm The Ground of the Unity which states "The Unitas Fratrum takes part in the continual search for sound doctrine. In interpreting Scripture and in the communication of doctrine in the Church, we look to two millennia of ecumenical Christian tradition and the wisdom of our Moravian forebears in the faith to guide us as we pray for fuller understanding and ever clearer proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (Ground of the Unity #4)

We call each one another brother and sister because we see each other as a child of God, not because we agree on all issues. We are in relationship because God has called us together as the Moravian Church, not because of anything we have done, but to love and serve God and our neighbor. We further believe each of us comes to our point of view out of our common faith in the Lord. Above all else we are called to be faithful to Christ as our Chief Elder, and to be about fulfilling the Great Commission to make disciples. We fervently believe God has kept us together for these reasons.

Jesus prayed that we may all be one - as Bishops we echo this prayer. Our challenge as the Moravian Church is to be the unity we pray for.

Grace and Peace,

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