



THE PROVINCIAL ELDERS' CONFERENCE

(EXECUTIVE BOARD)

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THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

Northern Province

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Recently the Provincial Elders announced the elimination of three staff positions. This included two part time receptionists, Genny Vass and Alma Elo, in the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania office and the Administrative Assistant, Esther Glas, in the Sun Prairie, Wisconsin office. We are writing to follow up this announcement with further information.

It is possible that we might staff the front desk in Bethlehem with a staff of volunteers, who would continue to provide personal greetings to those who visit and call the office. In the meantime, our voice mail system will direct you to whomever you are calling. In regard to the Sun Prairie office, Western District President, Jim Hicks has written on behalf of the Western District Executive Board. His letter follows.

Many of our congregations have asked us to examine our Provincial Budget in order to find ways to reduce costs. The total cost savings of these decisions is approximately \$104,700 after the costs of the closure are complete. These are difficult times. These decisions involve employees and life in a way that is difficult for the church to do. Our lives have become intertwined with each of them. Genny Vass, Alma Elo and Esther Glas have served well. They have represented the faith of the church in its best sense as a welcoming presence and a warm inviting voice on the phone. A voice mail system/answering machine will not replace this dimension of our ministry. We acknowledge that fact, but we have taken the voice of our congregations seriously and we have made decisions that have been difficult, but necessary. We request that you will remember these faithful employees in your prayers as they continue their service and assist in the transition that is before us.

By way of additional explanation the members of the Western District Executive Board wish to communicate the following as well:

Greetings and peace to each of you!

As the WDEB reviewed the work of the Western District (WD), we concluded that a full time Administrative Assistant position was no longer warranted. The yearly cost of this position has been eighty-two thousand five hundred dollars (\$82,500). This sum represents salary, benefits, office rent, and office expenses on a per year basis and has been funded by Provincial Administrative assessments, as is the case for all district offices.

For many years it has been a gift for the Western District to be able to rely on WD Administrative Assistant, Sister Esther Glas, whom we know you will hold in your prayers. However, the work has changed considerably and we no longer find that we should fund a full time position when the work can be managed in other ways.

Following are some changes that have occurred in the last 30 years which have influenced this decision:

- 1. The Western District's membership has changed.
 - a. 1979 - 44 Congregations with 11,864 Members,*
 - b. 2008 - 36 Congregations with 7,191 Members. In addition, we currently have two (2) church plants in the Western District. However, those ministries are administered and guided by the Provincial Elders' Conference assisted by the New Church Strategy Committee and Brother Fred Lehr, Director of Church Planting.**
- 2. Computers have eased the process of correspondence, record keeping and communication.*
- 3. Most of our congregations are wrestling with financial stressors. Part time pastors now serve 10 WD congregations. Some congregations have balanced their budget by using saved assets that are now diminished.*

While declining numbers can lead to discouragement, there are hopeful signs of change in many congregations. Of particular note are outreach ministries in both local and distant neighborhoods. Where Joint Board leaders are primarily focused on outreach, health is evident.

Several steps are in place to address the coming changes, including:

COMMUNICATION

WDEB member, Brother Jason Andersen, focuses on Communication. The newly updated WD website reflects his efforts and commitment and we expect it to be a regular source of updated information. In the future, I will send email updates to the WD directly. We will need to implement a process to keep the WDNews&Notes email address list updated. Currently there are about 400 persons on that list. We anticipate expanding the list as we seek to offer regular information and encouragement to local church leaders and others.

CALL PROCESS/PASTORAL RECRUITMENT

WDEB member, Brother Bruce Loppnow, continues to focus and review how we implement the call process. Because the call process involves some specific expertise, we have asked the Eastern District Office for assistance in such matters. We are thankful they have agreed.

FINANCES

WDEB member, Brother Jeff Bradley, tends to the financial matters of the WD and is in contact with our WD Treasurer, Sister Judy Kaaua. Beginning in 2010, we anticipate that congregations will direct their WD assessments to the Provincial Controller, Sister Tina Giesler; however, Judy will continue to sign our checks and manage our WD finances along with Jeff. Further information will be shared with church treasurers in subsequent correspondence.

Along with the above WDEB members, Sister Kay Wipperfurth (Fund Development), Sister Diane Klawikowski (Leadership Development) and Brother Bruce Nelson (Pastoral Support) continue to take responsibility for leadership in the Western District.

Looking ahead, we will secure a new PO Box address for the WD in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where the president resides. In the future, we expect it would be in the community of residence of the District President at that time. In addition, we will secure a new cell phone number. For

some time now, our clergy have called Jim directly on his cell phone and we expect he will now devote additional time to telephone conversations with others.

Some records will remain with the WD President while others that are rarely referenced will be sent to either the Archives or Provincial Office. However, many of the records stored in the WD office are duplicates which we anticipate shredding.

As further arrangements are made the Western District Board will pass them along to you. We are confident that the process the Western District Executive Board has in place, and a little patience, will give us a solid administrative footing.

Peace,

James T. Hicks, Pastor, President

Bruce G. Loppnow, Secretary

Diane Klawikowski, Leadership

Bruce J. Nelson, Pastor

Kay Wipperfurth, Vice-president

Jeff Bradley, Finance

Jason O. Andersen, Pastor

The administrative structure of the Northern Province places the costs for the district offices within the Provincial Budget. As the Provincial Elders' Conference struggled with how to reduce costs we have, in successive years, reduced the Provincial Budget. It soon became clear that, in a budget of \$1.5 million which allocates 2/3 to administration, the only way to seriously reduce costs would be to restructure. The Provincial Elders will be coming to the Synod of 2010 with a plan that will move us in that direction. The decision of the Western District Board acknowledging a significant change in operation brought this question to the fore much earlier. The Provincial Elders understand the risk that is involved in such a decision, but see this as a courageous step into the future. The operational base of the Moravian Church Northern Province has declined by some 10,000 members over the time when the current administrative structure was put in place. Congregations have said we need to adjust and we agree.

Please join with us in prayerful and thoughtful discernment of our future direction. The Synod of 2010 will most certainly be a time when the church will have an opportunity to gather to speak collectively to the questions facing us. We urge our congregations and our members to remember in your prayers and in your thoughts the members of our family, Genny Vass, Alma Elo, and Esther Glas, who have been personally impacted.

In Christ,

The Provincial Elders' Conference

David L. Wickmann

James T. Hicks

JoEllen LaPrade

David E. Bennett

Glenn Hertzog

Jill Westbrook

Stephen A. Gohdes

William E. Kiessling, Jr.