

THE PROVINCIAL ELDERS' CONFERENCE

(EXECUTIVE BOARD)

1021 Center Street, P.O. Box 1245, Bethlehem, PA 18016-1245

Telephones: 610-867-7566 – Moravian Church Center

610-865-3137 – P.E.C. President

610-866-9223 – Fax

Eastern District President 610-865-0302

Western District President 608-837-0537

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH • Northern Province

March 25, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“God is inviting, all the time; all the time, God is inviting.” Last week, I heard this litany shared between pastor and congregation at the Christian Faith Moravian Church in DeForest, WI. God IS inviting...all of us, all the time...into a deeper relationship with the living Lord and into a deeper commitment to participate in God’s ongoing mission to the world. Wherever I travel to worship and meet with people, I see signs of God’s Spirit inviting people to love more deeply and to live more fully as disciples of the risen savior. As we continue our journey through Lent...toward the cross of Good Friday and resurrection joy of Easter, I pray that all of you will experience God’s invitation in new ways. Thank you for how you live out the gospel every day...in every way.

Your provincial elders met March 10-12 in Bethlehem, PA to be about the work of the church. Here are some updates I share for your information, that are organized around the areas that shape our common ministry. As always, God – and our identity in Christ – are at the center.

1. Healthy Congregations –

- a. The New Church Strategy Committee and the church planters in our province will meet in Chaska, MN March 28-30 for a summit. I invite your prayers for this gathering, facilitated by the Rev. Mary Frances of the ELCA as we explore our theology of church planting and how our province will move forward in this important aspect of our overall ministry.

2. Care and Nurture of Leaders

- a. I rejoice in the ongoing work of Barnabas and a clergy Leadership Group that encourage our clergy as leaders of faith and integrity. If you are not in a leadership group and would like to join one, contact Betsy Miller. I have created a Leadership Development Fund and invite you to join me in making gifts to this fund in support of leadership development efforts for lay and clergy.
- b. The Clergy Emergency Assistance Fund Advisory Group – formed by action of synod – has been named. The Rev. Keith Harke is chair; other members are Gary Bailey (East), Alex McDonald (West), Joachim Schubert (Canada), and the Rev. Tammie Rinker, at large. The group is developing guidelines and an application process for clergy to receive emergency funds. The 2011 budget includes a line item of \$12,000 for this ministry. We are extremely grateful to Bill Brese from the

Canadian District who offered a leadership gift to this fund. I encourage others to offer gifts in support of this fund.

- c. Youth Ministry Coordinating Team and Training Event – synod authorized the formation of this team and called for a youth leader training event. Members of a team are being sought and plans are in the early stage with Moravian Theological Seminary to host the first event.
- d. Human Resources and Benefits Commission (HRBC) is a newly formed group that will meet with Mary Ann Hanas, our Director of HR and Benefits, to review all aspects of HR and benefits, including health care and pension.

3. Human Sexuality

- a. The PEC is pleased to announce that the Task Force to Study Human Sexuality as outlined at synod has been formed. Members are:
 - o Gary Marsh – Chair; Gary is Director of Stewardship for the province
 - o Bill Andrews – pastor at St. Paul’s, Upper Marlboro, MD
 - o Hopeton Clennon – bishop and chaplain at Moravian College and Theological Seminary
 - o Amy Frantz – member at East Hills, Bethlehem, PA
 - o Amy Gohdes-Luhman – pastor at Main Street, Northfield, MN
 - o Bernalyn Jones-Clark – member at United in New York City, NY
 - o Peggy Ondrajka – member Unionville, MI
 - o Marion Perrin – member Rio Terrace, Edmonton, Alberta, CA
 - o Paul Peucker – member Central, Bethlehem, PA and archivist
 - o David Piper – member Goshen, Leonard, ND
 - o Kay Ward – bishop, Wisconsin Rapids, WI

This group represents a broad range of people and perspectives that reflects our province. They have held their first meeting, and were guided in their initial process by Susan Nienaber, Senior Consultant of the Alban Institute, who will serve as an occasional resource for their work. The group is developing a process and plan to engage all regions of the province “(including provisions for dialogue materials and any necessary resource persons)in congregational forums in the year 2011 for the purpose of collaborative dialogue and prayer discernment of the Christian service of homosexual persons” (from synod resolution). They covet your prayers for their work and the upcoming forums.

4. Restructure

- a. Synod called for the formation of a study commission to discuss *“how the current Provincial structure does or does not meet Provincial needs and to gather recommendations about suggested changes to the Provincial structure”* (from synod resolution). In order to facilitate this process, the PEC has engaged the consulting services of the Dr. Craig Van Gelder, professor of Congregational Mission at Luther Seminary. Craig has consulted with congregations and denominational level judicatories for thirty years and will bring a missional perspective to this work.
- b. The PEC will be meeting with Dr. Van Gelder to develop a process to invite individuals (as outlined in the synod resolution) to serve on this study commission.

5. Finance

- a. Finance Committee – members are currently being invited to serve on a Finance Committee that will advise the PEC on all matters of finance. Judy Kaaua, member of PEC, will chair this committee which will work closely with the Finance Office.
- b. Alternative methodology of giving – those attending synod will recall that the Resources Team came very close to crafting an alternative method for calculating how much each congregation will be asked to offer in support of our common ministry as a province. A team has been working since synod to develop this plan and it is being vetted through PEC. Look for this plan to be rolled out sometime later this year.
- c. Past Due Balance Policy – information went out to all congregations about a plan that allows churches that have been arrears to have some past balances forgiven when paying 100% of current year askings. We hope this new policy breathes hope into congregations that had fallen into despair and encourages a spirit of full partnership among all our churches.

6. Relationships with Others

- a. The Moravian-Episcopal Full Communion celebration on February 10 was a wonderful expression of the unified witness of Christ’s people. We thank Central Moravian Church for hosting this event, and Gary Harke and Maggie Wellert for their role in bringing about this celebration and the full communion agreement.
- b. We are working to develop a three-way coordinating committee among the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Episcopal Church and us as we live into our full communion agreements.
- c. The Board of World Mission continues its search for an Executive Director, and thanks Bob Sawyer for his fine leadership as interim executive director.

- d. Unity matters – Amy Gohdes-Luhman and Worth Green (Southern Province) represent the Americas Region of the Unity at the Unity Commission on Theology, which will hold its meeting in London in May.

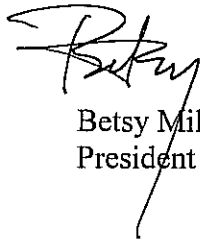
7. Administration and Properties

- a. The PEC purchased a parsonage for the PEC president at 3255 Chenault Dr. in Bethlehem. It is a gracious, yet simple three-bedroom ranch in a residential neighborhood in the northern section of the city.
- b. We are working to make the annual report easier to fill out and to make the information you report more useful to you and the church.

8. Communication and Transparency

- a. I have begun what will be regional “Listening Sessions” around the province. Look for an invitation to gather in your area sometime this year. In order to manage costs, I am trying to combine those sessions with other meetings/gatherings already planned.

Grace and peace,



Betsy Miller
President