

# 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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May 23, 2011

This weekend I planted a vegetable garden. It's a bit late for this part of God's world, but by the time I built a raised bed, got topsoil delivered, and built the fence to ward off deer and rabbits, the lettuce, tomatoes, beans, and herbs just got in this weekend. Getting my hands in dirt and planting seeds feels good. The garden is pretty small, and by the time I add up the costs of all that went into it, each tomato will cost far more than I could buy it at the local store. I wasn't looking for a return on investment (ROI). I wanted to grow my own food and participate in God's creation.

What kinds of seeds have you been planting these days? And what is your anticipated return on investment? Very often, God invites us to plant seeds that we may never get to see harvested. We may not get any ROI – immediately, during this particular pastorate, and perhaps not even in our lifetime. But in ministry, we are called to take the long view – and plant seeds for the sake of God's reign – trusting that every seed we plant will bear fruit someday, somehow, somewhere in some life. That's faith. That's ministry. May your gardens grow bountifully, and your ministries grow faithfully.

I offer some updates on the ministries of the province:

### Healthy Congregations

1. The New Church Strategy Committee held a summit with all church planters in late March to discern God's leading as we move forward in this important ministry of evangelism. In the midst of tremendous healing, hope emerged, along with the first draft of a working paper on a Moravian Theology of Church Planting, which seeks to place church planting within the theological framework of who we are as the Body of Christ. Another outcome of this gathering is a decision by the Provincial Elders' Conference to appoint the Rev. Dr. Darryl Bell to a one-quarter time position as Interim Church Planters' Resource Advisor. This appointment runs through December 31, 2011, with possible renewal. Darryl will give  $\frac{3}{4}$  time to his work at pastoral leader of The Promise, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  time to this new position. He will serve as an encourager and resource to the planters, advising them on issues of ministry and administration. He will serve as the liaison with the New Church Strategy Committee and the PEC. We celebrate Darryl's long and faithful service as a church planter and the many ways he already serves as 'senior statesman' of the planters. I invite your prayers for Darryl as he begins this new ministry in our province. Darryl's appointment will give the NCSC and PEC the time to more fully explore how we will provide leadership to our new and existing congregations and leaders.
2. Sexuality Task Force – under Gary Marsh's capable leadership, and with the consulting services of Susan Nienaber of the Alban Institute, the task force has concluded its second meeting and is developing a process and timeline to engage all regions of our

province in holy conversations concerning the ordination of gay and lesbian pastors in committed relationships. Please continue to pray for their work and for the meetings that will soon be scheduled in your area.

## **Care and Nurture of Leaders**

1. Guidelines developed for the Clergy Emergency Assistance Fund have been approved by the PEC. Our thanks go to the group that developed these and will administer applications for assistance: Keith Harke (chair), Gary Bailey, Alex MacDonald, Joachim Schubert, Tammie Rinker, and Mary Ann Hanas (HR and Benefits Director). Watch for more information about the fund.
2. Youth Ministry Coordinating Team – we are inviting young people from around the province to serve on this team, as outlined in the synod resolution. The purpose is to coordinate ministries and opportunities for youth across the province, and more specifically, to plan Convo.
3. We continue to discuss issues of credentialing clergy and the impact of increasing numbers of lay people who may be serving congregations and ordained servants working part-time. We seek to be responsive to the changing landscape while upholding core competencies and values.
4. It is with deep concern that I report that, as of today, no Northern Province Moravians will be entering theological seminary this coming fall. To our knowledge, this is the first time in memory when there are no incoming NP Moravian students. What are you doing to plant seeds of God's call in the lives of young or second-career people? I ask your ongoing prayers for continuing students: John Fritts, Lloyd Gooden, Laura Gordon, James Lavoy, Mark Newman, Rhonda Robinson, and Rebecca Schoeneberger. Congratulations to Charles Harewood who received a Certificate in Theological Studies from MTS and has accepted the call to serve as pastor of First Moravian Church in New York City.
5. The newly formed Human Resources and Benefits Commission met last week to review pension, health care, and other benefits for servants in the province. We thank members of this commission for their ministry: James Hicks (chair), Gary Straughan, Kevin Brown, Jon Conrad, Mike Ketron, Cindie Smith, Tina Giesler (Controller), Mary Ann Hanas (HR Benefits Director), Marie Cestone (Benefits Assistant)

## **Restructure**

Invitations have been sent out asking individuals from across our province to prayerfully consider serving on the restructure commission under the guidance of our consultant, Dr. Craig Van Gelder. He will work with the Commission to create a process to engage the entire province in an exploration of our identity and purpose so that we might organize ourselves to live into God's intended purpose for our province.

## **Finances**

1. The task force that continued the work begun at synod regarding the new method of calculating the way we fund our common ministries brought its recommendation to the PEC for review. The group is now meeting with eight congregations around the province

to field-test the method before rolling out the new plan province-wide. Watch for information by late summer, in time for your annual budgeting process. We thank the members of this group for their creative work on this monumental task: Andy Meckstroth (chair), Lowell Hewitt, Judy Kaaua, Graham Kerslake, Jay Larson, Mary Catherine Tachovsky, Tina Giesler (Controller).

2. Finance Committee – immediately following synod, the PEC formed a Finance Committee to provide fiscal oversight and offer recommendations to PEC for action. We offer thanks to God for the service of Judy Kaaua (chair), Jim Blair, Graham Kerslake, Andy Meckstroth, and Tina Giesler (Controller). Their first meeting will be in June.
3. We have transferred all the provincial invested funds to the Moravian Ministries Foundation, with appreciation for their prudent management.

It is a joy to serve God in partnership with all of you. I continue to make visits to various areas of the province as my travel schedule allows. I look forward to visiting with you and learning the ways that God's Spirit is at work in your midst. As the winds of Pentecost blow through our churches, the provincial elders join me in praying for ongoing renewal of passion and joy as we follow the Lamb who has conquered!

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Betsy Miller", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Betsy Miller  
President