



August 26, 2019

A Pastoral Letter from Bishops Residing in the Southern Province

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all.

We write to address certain matters which have arisen in the Southern Province following the 2018 Provincial Synod, specifically questions regarding the 2018 Synodal process and the Provincial Elders' Conference administration related to Resolution 14, "Leadership Roles and Diversity of Views" (a resolution which affirmed the freedom of conscience of individual congregations and pastors "whether or not to administer a rite or sacrament in any particular situation" including the rite of marriage to same-sex couples).

It is not our place as bishops to interfere in any way with the administration of the Province or a Synod. Ours is a pastoral role which seeks to encourage unity and love within the Province and the Unity. While the office of Bishop is valid throughout the Unity, all bishops function under the authority of the Provincial Board and Synod of the Province in which they reside. Acknowledging the sincerely held differing beliefs and opinions of Moravians in the Southern Province on topics related to homosexuality, we understand that there needs to be continued discussion and discernment among Moravians on this matter. Therefore, as a Bishops' Conference we have not prepared a statement regarding the church's response to homosexuality; rather, we seek to foster mutual understanding, respect and unity-in-diversity among all Moravians.

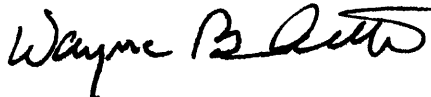
As Bishops and pastors residing in the Southern Province, we served as voting delegates to the 2018 Synod of the Southern Province. In that capacity we participated in all pre-Synod events and meetings, served on Synod committees, and presided over daily celebrations of Holy Communion at Synod, in addition to offering ongoing intercessions for the Lord's guidance for the Synod. It is our unanimous opinion that the way in which the 2018 Synod of the Southern Province was planned and conducted was in every way consistent with the Constitution of the Moravian Church Southern Province and the Standing Rules of Synod. We give thanks for all the work done prior to Synod and during Synod to make the process as efficient and transparent as possible and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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Likewise, we believe that the Provincial Elders' Conference, duly elected at the 2018 Synod, has been faithful in implementing the actions of Synod, specifically actions approved by Resolutions 14 and 13. We are saddened that some within the Southern Province have called into question either the process of Synod or the administration of the Provincial Elders' Conference. We will continue to give prayer support for our elected Provincial Elders and the ministry they provide on behalf of the Southern Province.

Our hope is that the spirit of Resolution 13 of the 2018 Synod will govern our thoughts, words and deeds, "Resolved, that any person, group, congregation, agency and entity within the Southern Province retains the right to make opinions related to LGBTQ+ issues known, without fear of recrimination, provided such opinions live up to our covenant: 'We will not hate, despise, slander, or otherwise injure anyone.'" (Moravian Covenant for Christian Living, V. Our Witness in the World, A. Love Toward All. Par. 29) More than ever perhaps, our world needs the witness of Christian Unity and love one for another. May our Chief Elder continue to lead and guide us to demonstrate that witness.

Grace and peace,



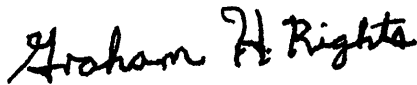
Wayne Burkette



Carol Foltz



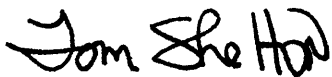
Sam Gray



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