



MORAVIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Provincial Elders' Conference

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We write to provide a summary and update to pastors, boards and the membership of our Province about our 2018 Synod decisions regarding homosexuality and the church. The full texts of Synod Resolutions 13 and 14 are available on the Provincial website.

- We have differing understandings and views within the Moravian Church, our Province, congregations, and families regarding homosexuality.
- These sincerely and strongly held differences are based on our differing understandings and interpretations of Scripture. (1995 Synod; Unity Synod 2002)
- In response to the call of our Synod (2010, 2014), during 2015-2017 our Province engaged in a significant time of study, discernment and discussion about these differing views.
- The question before the church, which was addressed at Synod, is: How will we remain united in fellowship and mission together while holding these different understandings?
- We have been guided by the principle that our differing understandings and views about homosexuality should not divide those who profess “Jesus is Lord”. (Unity Synod 2002, Unity Board 2010, Unity Committee on Theology 2011).
- Following long-standing Synod procedures and rules, our 2018 Synod reached a decision about moving forward.
- After days of Committee and floor debate, the delegates at our 2018 Synod decided:
 - To declare that “our unity in Christ is far greater than our differing views and understanding about homosexuality and the church, and that we can be welcoming, respectful and loving toward one another in our differences.” (Resolution 14, which passed by a 64% majority vote of Synod)
 - To recognize and respect differing viewpoints about LGBTQ+ issues and the expression of those views, provided such expressions lived up to our Moravian Covenant of Christian Living (para. 29): ‘We will not hate, despise, slander, or otherwise injure anyone.’ (Resolution 13)
 - To allow disagreement (according to conscience) with a decision of Unity Synod 2016, and what is stated in certain portions of Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum regarding marriage.
 - To affirm the traditional role of pastors and church boards in determining matters related to membership, who receives rites and sacraments (including marriage), and the use of church property; the “freedom of conscience of pastors to decide whether or not to administer a rite or sacrament in any particular situation;”

the role of the PEC in overseeing candidacy for ordination, and administering the call process; and, the respective roles, discernment and decision-making of the PEC, church boards and pastors in the call process. (Resolution 14)

- To engage in continued study, prayer, reflection and conversation with one another. (Resolution 14)
- These decisions of Synod were communicated to pastors promptly after Synod, to be shared with church boards and congregation members. The PEC continues to support pastors and church boards as they make decisions in response to Synod's actions.
- Diverging from what is stated in Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum is a matter to be considered carefully. COUF affirms that a Province "develops a Constitution and Church Order for its particular area, adapting it to the local conditions." (COUF #208) There are provisions within COUF for such disagreements to be managed and resolved. (COUF §354, COUF #602, 603)
- Our Province remains an active part of the unity of the world-wide Moravian Church. Our PEC will continue to be in communication with leadership of the Unity as we take part in the work and witness of the Moravian Church.
- The current focus for our Province is on creating and maintaining a "space" for members, leaders and pastors for the "continued study, prayer, reflection and conversation with one another" for which our Synod called.
- This requires all of us to make an effort to respect understandings and viewpoints different than our own. How we manage these differences is captured well in our Moravian Covenant for Christian Living:

We will be eager to maintain the unity of the Church, realizing that God has called us from many and varied backgrounds, we recognize the possibility of disagreements or differences. Often these differences enrich the Church, but sometimes they divide. We consider it to be our responsibility to demonstrate within the congregational life the unity and togetherness created by God who made us one. How well we accomplish this will be a witness to our community as to the validity of our faith.

The Provincial Elders' Conference invites everyone to reflect on the prayer in the Moravian Daily Texts on the day assigned for the 2019 Watchword for the Southern Province:

God, you are one; we are so many and so different. What a miracle! Amid and despite the divisions of the world, you have called us, your people, to show to all humanity that we are one family—your daughters and sons. May it be so." Amen.
(Daily Text Oct. 25)

Sincerely,

Peggy Carter
Tommy Cole
Jeff Coppage
David Guthrie

Keith Kapp
Judy Knopf
Nola Knouse