



August 22, 2024

A Pastoral Letter Concerning Christian Community from the Bishops of the Northern and Southern Provinces to our Congregations:

As bishops of the Moravian Unity in the Northern and Southern Provinces, we greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Chief Elder. We had the blessing of spending August 19-23, 2024, in community at Laurel Ridge, the Moravian Conference Center in North Carolina. This has allowed us time to share fellowship and worship, discuss matters of importance, and pray for our Moravian Church.

In the Upper Room with his disciples, Jesus prayed: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." (John 17:20) We believe this is Jesus' prayer for us today.

What does it mean for us to be "one" when we live in a world of competing interests, values, and political points of view? How does this guide our civic discourse in these divided times? This divisiveness is nowhere more apparent than in our current political environment, where candidates' language and behavior directly conflict with our Lord's teachings.

As bishops, we acknowledge the diversity of thought that exists among ourselves. Still, we come together in love and mutual respect for one another because we find common ground in our commitment to Jesus Christ and our love and commitment to the Moravian Church. We challenge the Moravian Church to model a way of being together that does not yield to the pressures of polarization and fragmentation so evident in our society.

Rather than creating division, we affirm *The Ground of the Unity*, which states

We confess our share in the guilt which is manifest in the severed and divided state of Christendom. By means of such divisions we ourselves hinder the message and power of the Gospel. We recognize the danger of self-righteousness and judging others without love.

Since we together with all Christendom are pilgrims on the way to meet our coming Lord, we welcome every step that brings us nearer the goal of unity in Him. He Himself invites us to communion in His supper. Through it He leads the Church toward that union which He has promised. (Unitas Fratrum as a Unity)

We are called to live in Christian community and see each other as children of God; this does not require us to agree on all issues. We are in relationship because God has called us together to be faithful to Christ as our Chief Elder by serving a world in need of grace.

Jesus prayed that we may all be one - as Bishops, we echo this prayer for our Church today.

Grace and Peace,

D. Wayne Burkette
M. Blair Couch
Carol A. Foltz

G. Thomas Shelton
J. Christian Giesler
Amy Gohdes-Luman
Paul A. Graf

Samuel J. Gray
Michael E. Johnson
Douglas H. Kleintop
Lane A. Sapp
Kay Ward