

***A Report to the 2014 Southern Province Synod***  
*from the Bishops of the Unity residing in the Southern Province*

At the beginning of the quadrennial period following the Synod of 2010, the following were serving as bishops in the Southern Province: Wayne Burkette, Sam Gray, James C. Hughes, Robert Iobst, Graham Rights, Lane Sapp, and John Wilson. In 2012, brother Bob Iobst passed into the more immediate presence of our Savior, and in 2014 brother Jay Hughes and sister Rita moved their residence to Lititz, in the Northern Province.

Duties assigned to bishops are generally in four areas as set forth by the *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum*, par. #688. These include officiating at ordinations and consecrations, serving as pastor to pastors and congregations, being available for consultation with the Provincial Board (PEC), and intercession for the Unity and for the Church of Christ as a whole.

4 bishops officiated at the ordinations of 6 deacons in our province and one bishop officiated at the consecration of 2 presbyters. One bishop officiated at the ordination of 3 deacons and the consecration of one presbyter in our Mission Area, Cuba. One bishop took part in 5 episcopal consecrations in 3 Unity Provinces (Alaska Province, Czech Province and Northern Province) and 3 of our bishops participated in 3 ecumenical episcopal consecrations as part of our full communion relationships. In 2011 in Bethlehem, PA, 5 of our bishops took part in a Service of Celebration of Full Communion along with bishops from the Episcopal Church.

Our bishops have been available for consultation as called upon by pastors and congregations. Often this involves consultation by a pastor with a bishop who has been his or her ordaining or consecrating bishop. The bishops continue to take part in provincial activities and celebrations (for example, the Cup of Covenant service). Sam Gray represents the bishops of the Southern Province on the Interprovincial Faith and Order Commission. Our bishops are sometimes called upon to offer insight and opinions on matters of polity and practice (the role of the bishop; sacramental questions, etc.) and to offer prayerful and pastoral support in situations of conflict.

In their second year of seminary study, candidates for ordained ministry are assigned to a bishop who will officiate at their ordination upon their completion of studies and acceptance of a call to service. Students during this period were Andrew Heil, Jeff Jones, Betty Helms, Ginny Tobiassen, Zach Dease and Aaron Linville. Through the Bishop in Residence program annual visits are made to Moravian Theological Seminary by one of our bishops for interaction with students from both the Northern and Southern Provinces. During this quadrennium, the following have served in this program: Lane Sapp, 2010; Graham Rights, 2011; Wayne Burkette, 2012 and Sam Gray, 2013.

Our bishops participate in the life of local congregations by preaching as a supply preacher or upon a special occasion, such as an anniversary, officiating at dedications of buildings, or attending a Sunday worship service or other activity. One of our bishops has served as interim pastor in three congregations during this period.

The ministry of intercession to which the bishops are called is aided by monthly meetings with the President of the Provincial Elders' Conference, who presents a list of concerns that are

matters for prayer. At the beginning of the intersynodal period, these meetings were held prior to the meeting of the Moravian Ministerial Association on the first Thursday of each month, but more recently changed to the fourth Thursday in an effort to provide more time for prayer and discussion. The prayer concerns are also sent to Bishop John Wilson, who resides in Florida.

Matters about which the PEC wishes to consult with the bishops are generally brought up in the monthly meetings. Leadership for these meetings and coordination of other matters for the bishops is shared by rotation, each bishop serving for three months at a time. Each month, a bishop also leads a time of intercessory prayer with the sisters and brothers who attend the meeting of the Moravian Ministerial Association.

Customarily, every two years, bishops of the Northern and Southern Province gather for a conference. The last Interprovincial Bishops Conference was held at Laurel Ridge in August, 2011 (no conference was held in 2013). These occasions prove to be fruitful as they address matters the bishops and the PECs have requested to be placed on the agenda for discussion. Generally, a pastoral letter from the bishops is distributed in the Northern and Southern Provinces following the conference.

In 2013, Sam Gray represented the North American Region at a meeting in Tabora, Tanzania, to make plans for a Unity Bishops Conference to be held in Mwanza, Tanzania in July, 2014. Each Unity Province and Mission Province is asked to send a representative to this conference. Brother Sam Gray will represent the bishops residing in the Southern Province.

We are grateful for the close cooperation we experience from the PEC, pastors and congregations as we seek to respond faithfully to the call given to us by our Chief Elder and his Church.

D. Wayne Burkette  
Samuel J. Gray

James C. Hughes \*  
Lane A. Sapp

Graham H. Rights  
John F. Wilson

\* recently moved to Northern Province