

Report to the Synod of 2014
From: Unity and Ecumenical Affairs Commission

Mission Purpose and Values

The deep conviction of our Unity as expressed in The Ground of the Unity says: “*We recognize that through the grace of Christ the different churches have received many gifts. It is our desire that we may learn from each other and rejoice together in the riches of the love of Christ and the manifold wisdom of God.*” The purpose of this Commission is to work with the Provincial Elder’s Conference to maintain and nurture our relationships with other denominations and the other provinces of our world-wide Unity, and even learn and participate in new and/fresh ways to fulfill this deep conviction. The following is a report on our various ecumenical and Unity contacts and activities during this inter-synodal period—2010-2014.

Summary of Activities

The Unity

Our worldwide Moravian Unity presently consists of 21 full Unity Provinces, 6 Mission Provinces, 2 Unity Undertakings and 14 Mission Areas. The Southern Province has responsibility for supervision of 3 of these Mission Areas (Cuba, Peru, Sierra Leone) through the Board of World Mission.

During this intersynodal period:

The Moravian Church in Cuba: was received as a Mission Area of the Southern Province (at a meeting in Havana attended by David Guthrie and Sam Gray); received full recognition by the Cuban government and by the Cuban Council of Churches; celebrated a Women’s Conference, with the participation of Sisters Judy Ganz, Ginny Tobiassen and Illovis Gonzalez; celebrated its first National Conference with representatives from each of the 5 Districts and gave official approval to its Book of Order; celebrated the ordination / reception of 3 Deacons and the consecration of 1 Presbyterian; began the development of a new “fraternity” (similar to our “fellowships”) in the Guantanamo District; consists of 8 congregations and 12 “fraternities” in 5 Districts and one developing “fraternity” in Guantanamo.

The Moravian Church in Peru: hosted a Mission team from Friedberg Moravian Church; received an Antioch Servant from the Czech Province through the Board of World Mission; had 3 organizational meetings with representative from the Board of World Mission and the Unity; received two new pastors; consists of 3 house churches in San Juan de Lurigancho, Lima and 2 house churches in Chiclayo under the leadership of 2 pastors in Lima, 2 pastors in Chiclayo, 1 missionary to the Amazon region and 1 youth worker.

The Moravian Church in Sierra Leone: established new work in Morfindor, Kailahun District; continued the development of the Luawa Yiehun Community Moravian Church in Ngehun (more than 100 baptisms of children and adults) while continuing to explore outreach opportunities in Mbaoma and other villages by means of visits as well as through radio broadcasts on a local station, Radio Moa; continued the process of developing new leaders to assist the Rev. Mohamed and Sister Safiatu Braima in the work of the Mission; celebrated the dedication of the new wing of the Moravian Secondary School (Steve and Claire Wilson, Jeff Fulp and Donna Hurt represented the Southern Province at this event).

The Southern Province, through the Board of World Mission (along with the Northern and Alaska Provinces), continues its “partner province” relationship with the Eastern West Indies Province, Costa Rica, Guyana, Honduras, Labrador, Nicaragua and Western Tanzania. Beyond these partnerships, Southern Province Moravians maintain relationships with other areas of our Worldwide Unity: Jamaica (mission teams); Czech Province and Mission Province (visits,

participation in consecrations); Northern Ireland (Graham Rights visits); Kenya (Ray of Hope Ministry through Michael and Ceci Tesh and visits by Southern Province teams); Nepal (ministry of Shanti and Vani Pradhan); India (support of Rajpur school); Haiti (medical teams and visits); and beyond the Moravian Unity through Cross-Cultural Servants supported by the Southern Province Mission Society.

Worth Green and John D. Rights represented the Southern Province at meetings of the Unity Committee on Theology in Germany and South Africa, respectively; and our Province sent two young adult participants for the 2013 Unity Youth Heritage Tour in Europe. David Guthrie has been our representative on the Unity Board throughout the period (except for the Fall 2010 meeting, where we were represented by Sister Donna Hurt).

World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a voluntary association (begun in 1949) with 349 member churches from over 140 countries. Our Province is a founding member and joins 12 other Unity Provinces which are also members.

There are six major program areas for the WCC: The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century; Unity, Mission, Evangelism, and Spirituality; Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace; Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation; Education and Ecumenical Formation; Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation.

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches – the highest governing body of the WCC - met in Busan, Republic of Korea from 30 October to November 13, 2013. The theme for this septennial meeting was “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.” Due to budgetary constraints our Province did not send a delegation to this Assembly, but will be receiving reports from other Unity Provinces who participated.

At this meeting the assembly approved a new Statement of Christian Unity (statement of purpose). The full text is available online at the WCC website (www.oikoumene.org).

Dr. Agnes Abuom from the Anglican Church of Kenya was chosen as moderator of the WCC, and Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Rev. Mary Ann Swenson of the United Methodist Church, USA were chosen as vice-moderators.

The Presbyterian Church (USA)

The 2010 Synod affirmed a covenant partnership with the PCUSA. This has found expression in such things as: sharing our BCM Resource Center with Salem Presbytery; Moravian participation and leadership in the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators; and welcoming a Presbyterian intentional interim pastor to serve one of our congregations. The Commission made a presentation to the Salem Presbytery meeting in Greensboro, NC October 2010 as this new relationship began. Forty of our congregations are within the boundaries of this Presbytery. The Commission has begun exploring cooperative work with Salem Presbytery in such areas clergy continuing education, and social ministries (such as hunger advocacy).

The United Methodist Church

The 2010 Synod approved beginning a bilateral dialogue at the invitation of the United Methodist Church. A separate report from the ongoing dialogue has been provided to Synod delegates.

The Episcopal Church

The Synod of 2010 approved a full communion relationship with the Episcopal Church. Five of our bishops were part of a delegation which shared in an inaugural worship service in February 2011, in Bethlehem, PA. Four of our bishops led a worship service at the 2011 House of Bishops gathering at Kanuga in NC. In 2012 Carl Southerland began serving as a pastor in the Episcopal Diocese of Western NC. During this intersynodal period 3 of our bishops have individually participated in three episcopal consecrations (NC, VA, and Rhode Island). The first meeting of the Moravian-Episcopal Coordinating Committee was held at Home Moravian Church in early 2013. Our representatives have been Wayne Burkette and Liz Leonard. A separate report from this Committee has been distributed to Synod delegates.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

We began a full communion relationship with the ELCA in 1998. The Lutheran-Moravian Coordinating Committee meets on an annual basis. Our representatives during this intersynodal period have been: Bob Hunter, Tracy Pryor, Chris Thore, Kelly Moore. A separate report from this group has been provided to Synod delegates. The Commission receives reports from the Coordinating Committee and continues to discuss ways the two churches can work together regarding the exchange of clergy and on joint mission projects. February 16, 2014 Covenant Moravian Church and Water of Life Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Wilmington, NC celebrated a joint ministry covenant. The Rev. Rachel Connelly (pastor at Water of Life) was installed as pastor of Covenant as the two congregations engage in shared witness and mission.

National Council of Churches of Christ

The Southern Province was a founding member of the NCCC in 1950. The NCC's 37 member communions -- from a wide spectrum of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African American and Living Peace churches -- include 45 million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation. By mutual agreement the Northern Province is the primary representative to the Council, which has undergone a major reorganization and re-orientation in 2012-2014. Participating communions now gather at four "convening tables": Education and Leadership Formation; Faith and Order; Interfaith Relations; and Joint Advocacy and Justice. The Council is currently focused on addressing the injustices of mass incarceration and interfaith relations with a focus on peace.

Christian Churches Together

The Southern Province is a member of Christian Churches Together, which may have the broadest reach of any ecumenical organization. The "families" of American churches included are: Evangelicals and Pentecostals, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, historic Protestants (including Moravians), and historic Black Churches. Also included are major Christian organizations such as Bread for the World. CCT is a very lean organization, employing only an executive director and an administrative assistant.

The stated purpose is to "enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world." The primary expression of Christian witness so far has been agreement on formal statements addressing important national issues of social ethics (poverty, racism, immigration reform). The annual meeting of CCT in Austin, Texas in Feb. 2013 issued a call for humane immigration reforms which makes clear that Christian principles and biblical imperatives motivated the call. The topic of the 2014 annual meeting in Newark, NJ, is "mass incarceration." The presidents of the Southern Province over the years have represented both the Southern and Northern Provinces, attended the annual meetings of CCT and have brought back positive reports.

North Carolina Council of Churches

The North Carolina Council of Churches has, for the past 78 years, existed for two primary purposes: to promote and model Christian unity, bringing people together across the lines of denomination and race which have divided us; and to enable people of faith to work together on issues of justice, compassion, and peace.

Specific program highlights from the past four years include: beginning Partners in Health and Wholeness to assist clergy and parishioners in living healthier lives; expanding Acts of Faith, a lectionary-based worship resource addressing Christian unity and social justice. producing "Eating Well: For Ourselves, for Our Neighbors, for Our Planet, a biblically-based, multigenerational curriculum addressing the connections between how we eat and nutrition, physical activity, climate change, farm worker justice, and peace; conducting annual statewide conferences and seminars on Christian unity, legislation, food and faith, and creation care; working through the Raleigh Report Network to support legislative agendas of prophetic social justice. Further information about the Council's mission, purpose and work may be found at its web-site: www.nccchurches.org.

Our Province has been a member of the Council since its founding, with Bishop J. Kenneth Pfohl playing a leading role in the Council's early years. John D. Rights served on the governing board for six years (2006-2012), and David Guthrie was recently elected to the Board.

Florida Council of Churches

During the past four years, the Florida Council of Churches has addressed issues that impact the work of the Body of Christ in Florida. These include: the continuing effect of crushing poverty on our most vulnerable citizens – especially children and the aged; caring for creation: The preservation of our environment – including fragile areas such as the everglades and our abundant wetlands; race relations, including advocacy of justice centering on the shooting of the teenager, Trayvon Martin; immigration reform; seeking an end to human trafficking which, in addition to the illicit sex industry, also persists in the areas of construction, agriculture, and domestic work. The council is an ethnically and theologically diverse group engaged in the ongoing work of strengthening a common witness for Christ. For several years Willie Israel has served as the Moravian representative to this Council.

Future Directions

As the Unity and Ecumenical Affairs Commission is reorganized by the Provincial Elders' Conference after Synod and continues its work, the current members see the following as possibilities for the future: a) developing and communicating to members of the Province a broader and deeper understanding of our world-wide Unity, and the concerns, developments, ministries and activities in which our brothers and sisters (over 1 million!) are engaged. b) establishing greater cooperation in mission and ministry between our Province and our full communion partners through a local coordinating committee composed of representatives from the various groups.

The Unity and Ecumenical Affairs Commission:

Bill McElveen, Chair (King); Daniel Crews (Archives), Jim Doss (Peace), Don Frey (Home), Sam Gray (Bishop), David Guthrie (PEC), Carlene Lloyd (Christ), Graham Rights (Home).