

**Unity Synod
August 12-20, 2016
Montego Bay, Jamaica**

The 43rd Unity Synod of our worldwide Moravian Church gathered under the theme, “Discerning Our Unity Together”, hosted in Montego Bay, Jamaica by the Moravian Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. 66 delegates from 26 Unity and Mission Provinces participated, in addition to invited guests, Synod staff, and observers. The Rev. Dr. Errol Connor, Vice President of the Eastern West Indies Provincial Board served as Synod President. Southern Province participants included delegates, John D. Rights, Craig Troutman, and David Guthrie; translator, Angelica Regalado, and bishop Sam Gray. Judy Ganz of the Board of World Mission served as Synod Secretary. Adriana Craver was present on behalf of the Unity Women’s Desk.

Worship and Bible Study

Bishop Devon Anglin (Jamaica) served as Synod Chaplain, led daily Bible studies focused on the Synod theme, presided at the closing service of Holy Communion, and provided spiritual support to delegates and staff, as well as to the staff of the hotel. Bishops Sam Gray, Kingsley Lewis (Eastern West Indies), and John Kent (Suriname) led daily worship. The Jamaica Province hosted a worship service for delegates on Aug. 14, at the New Irwin Moravian Church, Montego Bay, with the President-elect of the Unity Board, the Rev. Dr. Cortroy Jarvis (EWI), preaching. Worship included special prayers of intercession for the family of delegate Emmanuel Katuma, Northern Province, Tanzania, who died on the eve of Synod, and for the family of one of the hotel housekeeping staff who died after an automobile accident.

Hospitality

On Wednesday, Aug. 17, Synod delegates toured the Beaufort, Carmel, Bethlehem, and Faith congregations, and joined in the dedication as a national cultural heritage site of “Old Carmel” (ca. 1756), the mission station established by Moravian missionaries after their arrival in Jamaica in 1754. The day-long outing included lunch and a program at the Bethlehem Moravian College, in Malvern. Volunteer staff from the Jamaica Province provided ongoing care and support to delegates throughout Synod.

Reports

Friday and Saturday, Aug. 12 and 13 reports were shared from the Unity Board President (Bob Hopcroft), Unity Board Administrator (Jørgen Bøytler) Provinces, Mission Areas, Unity Undertakings, Unity Committees, the Moravian Church Foundation, and also about finances for the Unity.

Growth and Development

Synod ratified prior decisions by the Unity Board as follows: Designation as Unity Mission Area: South Asia (2010), Sierra Leone (2010), Zanzibar (2010), Ruvuma & Njombe, Tanzania (2010). Sud Kivu & Katanga, Congo (2014), Iringa, Tanzania (2014), and Kiwele, Tanzania (2016). Designation as a Unity Mission Province: Honduras Unity Undertaking (2012), Czech Unity Undertaking (2012), Moravian Church in Burundi (2014), and Moravian Church in Cuba (2016). Armando Rusindo, from the Moravian Church in Cuba was granted voting privileges after this decision of the Synod. Designation as a Unity Provinces: the Moravian Churches in: Democratic Republic of Congo (2010); Tanzania, Northern Province (2012); Malawi (2012); Tanzania, Lake Tanganyika Province (2012); Zambia (2014); Tanzania, Eastern Province (2014); and Guyana (2016).

Elections

At the Unity Board meeting prior to Synod, the following were elected to two-year terms on the Executive Committee: President, Cortroy Jarvis (Caribbean and Latin American Region), Vice President, David Guthrie (North American Region); and, members, Bob Hopcroft (European Region) and Happy Sikafunda (African Region). John D. Rights was elected to a second term on the Unity Committee on Theology, Sam Gray was elected the North American Region member of the Unity Mission and Development Board. Angelica Regalado, was elected the N. American Region member of the newly-created Unity Youth Committee.

Resolutions

Thursday and Friday, Aug. 18-19 focused on work in the various Synod Committees and consideration of proposals, which led to 56 separate resolutions by the Synod. Here are brief highlights:

- Established a Unity Cultural Heritage Foundation and Fund to assist with the preservation of important historical sites and facilities.
- Created a Moravian Unity Disaster Relief Fund, and steps to enhance response to natural and man-made disasters within the Unity.
- Provided funding through the Unity Budget to support the Unity Women’s Desk, non-voting representation for the UWD at Unity Synod, affirmed the role and organization of the UWD Advisory Board, moved the timing of Unity Women’s Consultations to a seven year interval; and tasked the Unity Women’s Desk to prepare a progress report on Provinces’ implementation of previous Synod resolutions for the inclusion of women in all forms of ministry within the church, including ordained ministry.
- Affirmed that “any church discipline exercised by the church should not be imposed on women disproportionately more than to men.”
- Affirmed previous Synod resolutions on Violence against Women and Children, and asked all Provinces to mandate a process whereby an individual can safely report abuse.
- Approved a total budget of \$199,000 for the Unity Mission and Development Fund during 2017-2023; and adjusted the membership on the Unity Mission Development Board.
- Adopted an annual Unity Budget of \$424,286 for 2017-2023, apportioned that budget to the Provinces, empowered the Unity Board to adjust the budget biennially, and wrote off any apportionments which were in arrears prior to and including 2013.
- Agreed to the transfer of a 24% ownership interest in C. Kersten & Co, from the Moravian Church Foundation to the Suriname Province, following a defined process and with the final approval of the Unity Board.
- Set priorities for grants provided from the Moravian Church Foundation as: 1) Theological training, 2) Unity Undertakings, 3) Moravian Church in Suriname, 4) Projects within Provinces, 5) Emergency grants, and 6) Other requests.
- Amended and approved revisions recommended by the Unity Committee on Theology to the Chapter in the Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum (COUF) on The Ministry.
- Empowered the Unity Mission and Development Board to identify the recipients of the annual Unity Prayer Day; and clarified details for the administration of this offering.
- Created a Unity Youth Committee, determined representation, and provided a voting membership at Synod from this Committee. Established and funded a Unity Youth Desk with a part-time Unity Youth Desk Coordinator.
- Approved a pilot project for Moravian African Studies, to be developed in cooperation with Moravian Theological Seminary (Bethlehem, PA) and Teofilio Ksanji University (Tanzania).

- Established an Associate of Moravian Theological Schools to continue work in the areas of: minimum standards for education for ordination, expected academic qualifications for those starting theological studies, and the number of academic subjects and Moravian topics to be included in theological education.
- Approved an August 9-22, 2018 “New World Unity Youth Tour” to include visits to Bethlehem, PA and Winston-Salem, NC.
- Made statements on Food Speculation, Concerning Refugees, on Human Trafficking, and on Terrorism and Violent Attacks.
- Formally adopted “Our Lamb Has Conquered. Let us Follow Him” as the motto of the Unity.
- Stated that the June 2014 actions by the Synod of the Moravian Church in America, Northern Province “concerning the marriage of same-gender couples and the ordination of homosexual people is not in accordance with the 2016 Unity Synod’s understanding of marriage based on Unity Synod 2016’s understanding of COUF, the Moravian Covenant for Christian Living, and Scripture,” and asked the Unity Board to “observe the development in the American Northern Province, to take necessary measures.” Synod also restated that: “Christian marriage in the Moravian Church is between a man and a woman.”
- Renamed the former Caribbean Region as the Caribbean and Latin American Region.
- Created a new category of recognition: “Prospective Mission Area”, with guidelines and description.
- Approved a process for Unity Synod to ratify designations made by the Unity Board for Unity Undertakings, Prospective Mission Areas, Mission Areas and Mission Provinces and Unity Provinces.
- Withdrew the Unity Board’s 2012 recognition of the United Alaska Moravian Ministries, but left open the possibility of restoring this recognition should the group or its members wish to be part of the Unity and follow its polity and practices.
- Stated that geographical borders of Provinces should be respected when new congregations are being formed.
- Reaffirmed that Provinces will report on their measured community impact to the Unity Board.
- Adopted a code of conduct to be followed when conflicts within a Province cannot be resolved and the Unity Board needs to be engaged for assistance.
- Clarified that, “a minister deprived of the rights connected with his/her ordination, is deprived of the said rights, whether being a Deacon, Presbyter, or Bishop.”
- Affirmed a prior decision of the Honduras Unity Province to remove Wincap Cassy as a bishop, and that he was no longer a bishop of the Unity.
- Commended the “Discussion Paper on the Role of the Worldwide Moravian Unity” to the Provinces and committees of the Unity for study and discussion, with reports to be submitted from the Provinces to the Unity Board.
- Determined that the 2023 Unity Synod would be held in the African Region.

Message to the Unity

The Unity Synod has been in session on 12th – 19th of August 2016 and sends greetings to the whole Unity. About 80 Moravians from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas were together for deliberations, prayer, worship and fellowship. Together we experienced wonderful Jamaican hospitality.

The theme of the Synod, “Discerning the Unity Together” gave perspective to Bible Studies, in conversations and in discussions. Worship services gave the Synod opportunities to experience the Unity together with Jamaican Moravians in a very special way.

Unity Synod also had the opportunity to listen to reports of the Moravian churches in the worldwide Unity, showing the scope of the Moravian Church. The reports illustrated the richness of the many task and challenges we meet in countries and cultures in which the Moravian Church is present. The

Moravian Church is truly a worldwide Unity, giving wonderful opportunities for living Christian witness.

A number of committees worked on finance, ministry, mission in culture, theological education, Unity affairs and questions concerning faith and order. It was particularly joyful for the Unity Synod to ratify designations of 8 new Mission Areas, 3 new Mission Provinces and 6 new Unity Provinces. Many resolutions on various topics showed that the Moravian Unity is a living church. We experience challenges in a world, where social injustice, poverty, terrorism, secularity, and war resulting in many refugees threaten millions of people around the world and calls the Moravian Church to social action, peacemaking efforts and preservation of creation. The need for mission, bringing the Gospel to the world is our calling.

Although we as a church and as Christian sisters and brothers are challenged with difficulties in the world, the many different topics being discussed also gave witness to what a living and vibrant church the Moravian Church is. We are seeking to be a Church, addressing the needs of people, whether spiritual, social or other.

The delegates can look back on blessed days with much work, Christian fellowship with brothers and sisters from many parts of the world and comfortable accommodation. At times the discussions were touching on difficult issues, which could be dealt with in a Christian spirit of love and trust. At times Unity Synod bowed in prayer in sympathy for brothers and sisters in Christ that had lost loved ones. At times the joy of Christ filled our hearts. We are thankful for being part of the Moravian Church and we affirm our wish to serve Christ.

As we discern the Unity together, Unity Synod 2016 agreed and invites the whole Unity in declaring and living on the motto “Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow him.”