

Interprovincial Board of Communication Report to the 2018 Synod of the Moravian Church Southern Province

Why We Are Here (our mission, purpose and structure)

The purpose of the Interprovincial Board of Communication (IBOC) is to promote the image, ministry, heritage, doctrine, life and mission of the Moravian Church; to provide information about its activities and opportunities; and to inspire and equip individuals within the Moravian Church and beyond to grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to serve as His disciples. The IBOC provides resources in print, audio-visual and digital media to make this possible. It carries out its own goals and works in cooperation with other ministries of the denomination.

The IBOC board of directors includes five members from each Province. Current members include Peggy Carter (PEC representative), Margaret Couch, Paul Knouse, Amy Linville, and the Rev. Ginny Tobiassen (board chair) from the Southern Province; and Terri Bischoff, the Rev. Lance Fox, Katrina Lehman, the Rev. Dan Miller and Jill Westbrook (PEC representative) from the Northern Province. Office staff includes Mike Riess, executive director; Susan Kiefner, communications assistant; and Jill Bruckart, customer service/business assistant. Financial and accounting services are provided by the Northern Province controller's office.

What We Do (our key responsibilities)

The IBOC represents the communication and publication ministry of the Moravian Church in America. We support both the Northern and Southern Provinces. Key responsibilities of the IBOC include:

- ***The Moravian Magazine***, the official journal of the Moravian Church in North America. This printed magazine chronicles and shares the life, faith, people and happenings of the North American Church. Every Moravian household in North America receives the magazine.
- **The North American editions of the *Moravian Daily Texts***, one of the oldest continuously published daily devotionals in the world. Each year, we compile, edit, design, produce and ship four editions of this daily devotional, along with the Directory & Statistics of the North American Church. Digital editions for the Amazon Kindle and other tablets are also available, and more than 24,000 people subscribe to the *Daily Texts* via e-mail and on Facebook.
- **www.Moravian.org**, the Moravian Church in America's main web presence. The site is a central informational resource for those interested in learning more about the Moravian Church, while helping connect congregations and current members to the wider denomination. We also manage Facebook pages for the *Moravian Daily Texts* and *The Moravian Magazine*.
- **Publications of the Moravian Church in America**. The IBOC offers more than 40 titles, along with worship and congregational resources, sacramental certificates, Moravian gift items and the Sunday bulletin service.
- **Communication resources for the Church**. We provide communication counsel and expertise, design options, workshops and other resources to congregations and church agencies in both provinces.
- **Church member database/official Directory & Statistics maintenance**. In partnership with the Moravian Ministries Foundation in America, the IBOC processes changes to the church member database for the two provinces. We also compile and publish the official

Directory & Statistics of the Church in North America and the yearly Desk Calendar & Plan Book with lectionary readings.

How We Do It (a summary of activities 2014-2017)

Moravian Magazine

- Produced 10 issues per year (eight in 2016) with a circulation of approximately 16,000. The magazine is mailed to all Moravian households in the Northern and Southern Provinces and to select ministries and agencies around the world.
- Editorial focus for The Moravian Magazine highlights key happenings and events within the church; mission and outreach efforts; congregational activities; best practices; spiritual opportunities; personal reflections and official news. In each issue we balance topic areas and locations to ensure broad interest. In 2015, 2016 and 2017, we also worked to include foundational information on central Moravian Church theology and doctrine.
- We continue to manage production, printing and postage costs to ensure cost-effective publication. Increases over the past four years have been less than 5 percent. In 2016, editor Mike Riess assumed design responsibilities for the magazine, saving more than \$25,000 per year on production costs. While this has caused some scheduling issues, we believe we continue to produce a professional, engaging and meaningful publication while saving considerable costs.
- Since 2014, we have included the Board of World Mission's Annual Report as part of our April magazine edition. This ensures that the Report reaches all Moravian households, while providing collaboration and cost-saving opportunities for the BWM and IBOC.
- Each issue is also available in graphic format on www.moravian.org, and all articles are available on the website.

Moravian Daily Texts

- The IBOC continues to assign, compile, edit and produce the annual North American editions of the *Moravian Daily Texts*, the oldest continually produced daily devotional in the world. The *Daily Texts* represents a major time and resource focus of the IBOC; however, it is central to our mission and a key revenue source for our ministry.
- IBOC produces four versions of the *Daily Texts* each year, including the paperback, hardcover, large print and journal editions. While annual sales have been slowly declining, we continue to sell between 13,000 and 15,000 copies per year; an additional 3,000 copies of the North American version are printed and sold in Germany.
- Contributors to the *Daily Texts* – those who select hymns to accompany the daily Bible verses and write the daily prayers – continue to be selected from among North American Moravians. Each year, we endeavor to include a balance of age, gender, geographic location and clergy/lay representation.
- To make the Spanish translation of the *Daily Texts* more affordable and easier to source, we entered a licensing agreement to print the Spanish version here in the U.S beginning with the 2015 edition. This saves considerable shipping expense and reduces the cost of offering the book by half.
- In 2014, we expanded the digital editions of the *Daily Texts* (originally only offered for the Amazon Kindle) to Apple iBooks and Barnes & Noble Nook platforms. We typically sell

between 500 and 800 copies of these editions, offering the *Daily Texts* to those who prefer digital books.

- We continue to license the *Daily Texts* to Mt. Carmel Ministries (who produce their own printed volume) and several individual congregations (who share the *Daily Texts* on their websites). These activities generate revenue for the IBOC while helping to spread the *Daily Texts* to new audiences.

Publications, Resources and Moravian Products

- Completed edits, design, resource development and production of the *Living Branches: Moravians Growing in Faith, Love and Hope* curriculum in partnership with the Eastern District Christian Education Commission and Southern Province Board of Cooperative Ministries. This 13-week curriculum is offered in four different age levels – lower elementary, upper elementary, youth (middle/high school) and adult versions. Offered as a free download to congregations, or in print for a nominal cost.
- Revised and reprinted the initial design of *Simply Moravian: A Modern Guide to the Ancient Essentials* by Ruth Cole Burcaw.
- Published *Keeping Time: Dances to the Beat of a Different Drummer*, a book of reflections and stories by the Rev. Brian Dixon.
- Completed the third printing of *Sing to the Lord a New Song*, the new Moravian Songbook originally introduced in 2013.
- De-archived and made type and quality improvements to *Readings For Holy Week Music Edition*. Reprinted this core title twice since 2014.
- Designed and oversaw production of six titles for the Provincial Women’s Boards of the Northern and Southern Provinces (three Bible studies and three mission books). Following production, we added Justin Rabbach’s *Common Unity: Community in Action* mission book to our regular catalog.
- Published annual editions of the Moravian Church Desk Calendar/Plan Book and Directory & Statistics.
- Introduced three new bulletin cover designs for Advent, using internal photography and design resources. We also continue to provide Moravian bulletin service to more than 100 congregations.
- Introduced new Moravian-themed items, including the Essentials café mug, leather bookmarks, wall calendars, Moravian Seal Christmas ornaments and more, in an effort to offer items that celebrate and promote Moravian identity.
- Began sourcing and offering Moravian-focused titles from Penn State Press to broaden our range of topics available.

Online Efforts

- Introduced redesigned store.moravian.org for improved customer experience, back-end efficiency, security and flexibility in product offerings.
- We continue to work on a responsive redesign of moravian.org. New content is added regularly, with all Moravian Magazine articles, Daily Texts, and weekly bulletin messages. We will be placing a major emphasis on our online efforts in 2018.
- Almost 16,000 people currently subscribe to the Daily Texts e-mail service, and more than 10,000 people “like” the Daily Texts on Facebook.

Interagency work

As an interprovincial agency, we partner with ministries in both the Northern and Southern Province to assist in our combined work. Some examples of these partnerships include:

- **Southern Province:** Coverage of major Province events; production of pre-synod video materials; continuing partnership with the Southern Province Board of Cooperative Ministries including and participation in training and leadership events, publication and website support, and more; and serving as communication resource.
- **Board of World Mission:** Editing and producing their Annual Report for publication; providing logo, publication and display designs; covering and promoting their efforts across various media; providing training at FIT First youth mission events; and more.
- **Moravian Music Foundation:** Promotion/advertising for major events; coverage and participation in the 2017 Moravian Music Festival; management of worship resources and music permissions; 60th anniversary logo designs; consulting with the new hymnal committee; production of *Irene the Musical* materials; and more.
- **Moravian Theological Seminary/Center for Moravian Studies:** Providing editorial and production services for *The Hinge*; teaching communication strategy for Worship & Polity classes; recording Moravian Theology and Moravian History classes for later use; and more.
- **Interprovincial Faith & Order Commission:** Completed copy revisions and design for a new church-wide brochure explaining the faith, history and ministry of the Moravian Church.
- We also provide coverage, documentation and communication counsel at **Southern Province** inter-Synod/pre-Synod gatherings, **Northern Province District** synods, district conferences and training sessions; offer promotional and communication support for **Moravian Ministries Foundation in America**, the **Larger Life Foundation**, **Unity Women's Desk** and **Moravian camping** ministries; and provide expertise and technical resources for promoting congregational events and best practices.

Future Direction and Opportunities

In 2018 and beyond, the IBOC will:

- continue to fulfill our mission to promote the image, ministry, heritage, doctrine, life and mission of the Moravian Church in America;
- evaluate current communication channels and focus areas to ensure our agency is meeting the needs of the church;
- expand and adapt technologies to foster greater communication, promotion and information-sharing within the church;
- continue to develop new Moravian-specific publications, resources and materials that educate, inspire and enhance Moravian identity;
- explore new revenue streams to ensure ongoing viability and stability for the IBOC and its work; and
- increase collaboration with Provinces, agencies and ministries to make the best use of available resources.

On behalf of the IBOC board and staff, thank you for your ongoing support of our ministry and its work.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Riess, Executive Director, IBOC