**From the Ecumenical Officer October 2017**

Often, in conversation with persons unfamiliar with the Moravian Church, we feel apologetic about the size and lack of visibility of the Moravian Church. But in order to be ecumenical, we really need to have a sense of who we are as Moravians and a sense that God is using our denomination now.

The last week of July I attended the 25th Moravian Music Festival, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the United States city with the visible Moravian presence. This means that Moravians there have to wrestle with the question of how best to use our history so that we are not identified solely with the past. In Old Salem, one of North Carolina’s main tourist sites, one may have to answer the question “Who *were* the Moravians?”

The Music Festival was an occasion to get a wonderful sense of the larger Moravian Church, with attenders from around the United and Canada as well as Germany and South Africa.

The festivals, held every four years, come out of the work of the Moravian Music Foundation, started 60 years ago to bring out of archives and dusty church closets music composed by American Moravians, especially in the late 1700s. In addition to vocal and instrumental concerts, festivals include workshops for music and worship leaders. But recent festivals have also highlighted newer composers. This festival’s concerts included works composed since 2000 by seven different Moravians—five of whom were in the choir or the audience! (One of the other two has died; the other lives in South Africa.)

Do we as congregations use every opportunity to share the gifts of our members? I know a congregation where grade-school piano students sometimes provide offertory music.

John Sinclair, on the faculty of Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, has conducted the last six festivals. This year he brought with him 25 students from Rollins College, some active in churches, some not, and exposed them to Christian worship and the Moravian Church.

Do we use opportunities to invite people outside our congregations to share in our life? In one of our congregations, Easter sunrise service has a band composed of high school friends of church members. I know of an urban congregation that invited a local Muslim leader to dialogue in worship about Christian-Muslim relations.

Part of the Festival was a children’s program with a concert presented by children.

Do we remember the gifts of children in our congregational life? Recently in worship I heard Scripture read by a third-grader who did as well as most adults.

Special events—a music festival, a provincial synod coming up in 2018—cannot substitute for the ongoing work of a congregation, but they can give us new energy to share the Christian faith, and our Moravian way of living it, with those around us.

*Lord Jesus, our Chief Elder, we give thanks for the Moravian Church, which has told us about your love for us and how to live our lives well; which has taught us to use our gifts in your service; which has shown us that your family is worldwide; which has encouraged us to listen to others, who may emphasize other paths of following you. May our Moravian traditions and other Christian traditions empower us to follow you faithfully. Amen.*

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