**From the Ecumenical Officer November 2017**

“First Fruits,” a painting by the eighteenth-century Moravian artists John Valentine Haidt, portrays Jesus Christ surrounded by representatives of Moravian mission work around the world.

Some years ago, when I was visiting in one of the former Moravian mission fields, I was impressed by the work of the church there. On reflection, I was aware of how little I expected, how racist my reflections were! (For the record, while some of my ancestors have been in what is now the United States since the 1600s, three of my grandparents grew up speaking German and emigrated to the United States in the late 1800s.)

As ecumenical officer of the Northern Province, I represent the Moravian Church in several different settings. In most of these, the central issue, whether explicit or implicit, is race: How do white Christians relate to the experience of African American, Asian, and Hispanic Christians? How do we see issues such as immigration and relations with police? A major role of our ecumenical contacts is to help us to feel more at home in our multicultural world.

In the United States and Canada, in the Northern and Southern Provinces, About 15 percent of Moravians are black, primarily in congregations of Moravians with roots in Central America, islands of the Caribbean, and northern South America. If we include the Moravian provinces of Alaska (United States) and Labrador (Canada), the non-white proportion increases slightly. Worldwide, Moravians are about 90 percent black, mostly in Africa.

In the United States we are faced with an increase in white nationalism, a belief that those of us are white are superior to those who are not and that those of us who are white should be running things.

Do those of us who are white believe we are wiser than those who are not? Are we uncomfortable when people of color are more visible and closer to us? As Moravians, and as followers of Jesus, I hope that we can honestly answer “No.”

Are we willing, in our own communities, to try to understand the lives and concerns of people of color, the majority of those who live in the United States and Canada are fellow followers of Jesus? I hope that we can honestly answer “Yes.”

May our ecumenical relations help us in this work.

*Lord Jesus, our Chief Elder, your ways are not the ways of the world. The world seeks to divide. You seek not to divide but to unite. May we live your welcome, in our ecumenical relations, in our congregations, and in our individual lives as your followers. Amen.*

Hermann I. Weinlick, Ecumenical Officer

Moravian Church, Northern Province