

A Memorabilia of 2009

Without a doubt, 2009 will go down as the year we Moravians took the future in our hands and reshaped our beloved Southern Province for many years to come. Rather than the traditional structure of Provincial Boards, which had been the practice since the formation of the Financial Board in 1859, we shall function with a new framework for shared ministry.

Years of work and study went into this decision. Recognizing decline in membership and worship attendance, the 2006 Provincial Synod called for a task force to review the Province's structure, from PEC to local congregations, and to propose a more effective organization. After many meetings, gathering information, conducting interviews, and studying the history of the Provincial makeup, the task force presented its findings and recommendations to PEC and then to the Province as a whole in several town-hall style meetings. Finally, last September 11-12, a Special Synod, meeting at New Philadelphia, by an overwhelming margin adopted the recommendations of the task force and set up a steering committee to put them into effect.

In the new structure, Synods will continue giving strategic direction for the Southern Province. PEC, enlarged to seven members from the current five, will implement Synod strategies and provide oversight for Provincial Support Services (treasurer's office, archives, and human services), the Board of Cooperative Ministries (ministry and mission), and congregations. Two affiliate boards will be Laurel Ridge and Sunnyside Ministry. New will be Regional Conferences of Churches, with congregations organizing by region or interest for mutual support in ministry.

What the Southern Province will look like, we cannot say, for at the moment it is very much a work in progress. But this stepping into the future is being done, in the words of the task force, with the goal to "realize our potential, thereby making our ministries more available and active by improving communication, polity, unity and community building, and discover how we might better organize ourselves for the service of Christ."

While we were reorganizing our Southern Province, we were reminded that we are part of a worldwide Moravian Church with the holding of Unity Synod last summer in England. Unity Synod meets every seven years and consists of elected delegates from all the Provinces of the worldwide Unity. As part of internal reorganization, the 2009 Unity Synod consolidated categories of Provinces into Unity Provinces and Mission Provinces. Costa Rica was added as a Unity Province, and Congo, Kigoma (Lake Tanganyika), Zambia, Malawi, Eastern Tanzania and Zanzibar, and Northern Tanzania as Mission Provinces. Two watchwords prevailed at Unity Synod: "support," both spiritual and material, and "fellowship," especially with potentially controversial issues on which no action was taken. Next Unity Synod: 2016.

While we were reorganizing our Southern Province, we were also living our church life under the old structure. And a very full church life it was.

"Leadership Focus" for 2009, the third annual workshop for church leaders and interested members, was a big success. This year it was held at three locations, Friedland in Winston-Salem, Palm Beach in Florida, and Peace in Charlotte. In addition, a day-long evangelism workshop was held at Friedberg in the fall. Topics covered included such titles as, "If Someone Asked You about Jesus, What Would You Say?" and "Jesus in the Starbucks, Jesus in the Streets."

This year's Provincial Women's Spiritual Life Retreat took place April 17-19 at Laurel Ridge. More than 50 Moravian women came from far and wide to participate. The theme for the weekend was "Our Lives Proclaim God's Love: Building Community, Sharing in Mission."

Four years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, America's Gulf Coast still offers opportunities for much-needed short-term mission. In addition flood-damaged

areas of Paducah, Kentucky, and hurricane-damaged Nicaragua and Honduras beckoned assistance of Moravians through the Volunteer Ministries of the Board of World Mission. Don't say you don't have an opportunity. It's out there, waiting for your helping hands.

Under the "old" structure of Provincial boards, church planting and extension has taken place through the Board of Evangelism and Home Missions, our growth engine, as we liked to call it. Among other activities, BEHM Director David Guthrie writes that "2009 proved to be a time of transition for new church development in our Province."

Holly Springs sadly closed its doors at the end of March. It began in 1999 as an outreach of Raleigh Moravian with Christ the King in nearby Durham also assisting. But though it had such promise, Holly Springs did not catch on in fast-growing southwestern Wake County. During its short lifetime, Holly Springs made a major contribution to Moravian Church history. With the call of Tracy Robinson as its pastor in August 2006 Holly Springs became the first predominately white Southern Province congregation to have a non-white as its minister, in this case Nicaraguan. Br. Robinson now serves in the Northern Province, organizing an outreach to Latinos in the Lehigh Valley area.

"Come and Worship" — that's the name of a "new" worship venue with a group that meets each Sunday at Chelsea's Coffee Shop in downtown Winston-Salem. Come and Worship has completed its second year of activity, and average attendance is around 30. The group continues to give away one-half of its offerings to missions and community agencies, and carries out "hands on" mission projects as well. "It's wonderful!" says one attendee. And it's all led by the likely trio of Br. Guthrie from BEHM, guitar-strumming Brad Bennett of Board of Christian Education, and "have music, will travel" Bishop Sam Gray of Board of World Mission.

BEHM has also had a year of change and reorganization in ministry to Hispanics. In February, the Rev. Enrique Alcantara concluded his work as Director of Latino Ministry Education and Development. La Iglesia Cordero de Dios (Lamb of God) moved to fellowship status. In June BEHM accepted with regret the group's decision to organize independently of the Moravian Church.

Then beginning in June, Hilda Regaldo, Director of Mission and Evangelism at Bethabara Church began part-time employment with BEHM as Latino Ministries Coordinator, working with a new Latino Ministries Committee to provide consultation, education, and support to local congregations as they develop ministries in their communities. Plans are under way for a Latino Ministries workshop in late January: "La Familia Morava Comparte la Mesa Con Todos" (The Moravian Family Shares the Table Together).

The active ministry of older adults continued in our Province through the Senior Friends organization. Their annual retreat at Laurel Ridge had a significant increase in participants — 46 this year. The Older Adult Committee started the "Moravian Voices of Experience" Choir, which began a music ministry to residents of nursing and retirement communities.

Br. Guthrie concluded his survey of BEHM with this observation: "After the Special Synod, our Board turned its attention to maintaining momentum in all ongoing ministries and preparing to effectively 'pass the baton' as a new structure for Provincial ministries emerges in 2010."

Notwithstanding the economic challenges the entire country has faced, Director Nola Knouse reports the Moravian Music Foundation has "continued to do what we do best — preserve, celebrate, and cultivate the musical life of Moravians. We enjoyed a great Music Festival in Belmont, North Carolina (the first Southern Province festival ever to be held outside of Winston-Salem). We have published 20 anthems in our own new 'Moravian Star Anthem Series.' We have released a new compact disk recording of Moravian vocal solos ('Loveliest Immanuel'). And we are working on the final proofreading of the forthcoming Shorter Moravian Hymnal. (This will have a different name, but it is essentially the sort of thing that was done in earlier centuries: a smaller

hymnal and liturgy book containing the ‘core’ of Moravian hymnody.)” In addition Music Foundation staff added many frequent-flyer miles to hold numerous workshops, conferences, and concerts in Florida, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York, North Dakota.

As if all that wasn’t enough, Sr. Knouse completed her studies at Moravian Theological Seminary and was ordained into the Moravian ministry. Her call? What else — specialized ministry as Director of the Moravian Music Foundation.

Director Knouse concludes by looking forward to 2010, which “promises to be more of the same — workshops, a concert tour to Europe, the Bethlehem Conference on Moravian Music, new recording(s), converting our catalog to electronic format, and so on.” Just enough to keep her busy.

Sometimes in a Memorabilia we overlook Moravian Archives, because — well, that is what we do, collect the Southern Province’s activities to be history for Moravians (and others) in the future. Aside from normal work, Archives took to heart the advice of the Provincial Treasurer to secure outside funding for our work. And so Moravian Archives is partnering with the Cherokee Nation and Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians to publish the entirety of Moravian mission records to the Cherokees. That is almost 100 years of diaries, correspondence, reports, committee minutes — truly a large slice of American history that has been very little explored. Look for volume one of *Records of the Moravians among the Cherokees* (that’s the official title now) next spring.

One transition that must be recognized in a Memorabilia: On March 4 ownership of Moravian Book & Gift Shop was transferred from the Moravian Church, Southern Province, to Old Salem Museums & Gardens. Eleanor Presley and George Higgins began Book & Gift in the fall of 1966 as the Moravian Book Room in the offices of Board of Christian Education on Church and Bank Streets. In 1977 the business was relocated to Main Street opposite Salem Square, where it could serve not only Moravians but thousands of visitors to Old Salem. Over its 45 years of service, Book & Gift distributed more than \$600,000 to worthy cause. Now under new ownership and management, Moravian Book & Gift will maintain the Moravian Church interpretation area and will continue to offer Moravian publications for sale. And the telephone number remains the same: 336-723-6262.

And now a rosy economic report: Despite the economic gloom of the previous year (anyone remember the late, great Wachovia Bank?), our Provincial Treasurer reported 2008 was “another good year, all things considered. While several churches struggled to make their Provincial Share payments each month, most of them found a way to make it happen.” What a wonderful report for that disastrous year 2008. Now, Mr. Treasurer and all church Boards of Trustees, how about just as rosy a report for 2009. (And remember, fellow church members, how they can best perform such a feat — by our giving more generously.)

Finally we take a brief survey of news from the churches, for here is the heartbeat of the Province.

The year 2009 was notable for one church especially. **Bethania** celebrated its 250th anniversary. On June 12, 1759, when the site was selected for the first planned community of the Moravians in North Carolina, almost all was still wilderness in northwest North Carolina, and we were in the midst of the French and Indian War. But a handful of Moravians from Bethabara plus eight families of newcomers took courage to make the beginning, which is now the second oldest Moravian Church in the South. Congratulations again to Bethania for 250 years of service to our Lord and Savior.

We are always looking for signposts along our way, and several of our churches are making sure we get it right with new signs pointing their way. **Friedberg, Clemmons, Covenant**, and **Unity** have new signs. Clemmons felt it was the biggest secret in town, since it sits off the main drag. Also sporting a new sign is **Laurel Ridge**, which is greatly appreciated by all of us who have passed the turnoff on the highway. It is made of stone, which is very fitting for our camp and conference center in the mountains.

Toward the end of March, the nation’s economy bottomed out and began a slow climb back toward health. But even before then a number of our churches were

planning or launching major building campaigns. Rather than try to upgrade its 109-year-old building, **Clemmons** took the plunge to begin anew. It helped that the church had the foresight to amass a \$1.8 building fund for a project it knew would soon have to face. **Hopewell** was mindful of costs and so acted as its own general contractor, either subbing out or calling on volunteers in the church. The result: a brand-new fellowship hall. **Union Cross** also called on its members for much of the work on its \$120,000 portico project so that only \$40,000 had to be borrowed or raised. Additional projects include a covered walkway, expanded fellowship hall, relocated picnic pavilion, demolished parsonage, and reconfigured parking lot. **Oak Grove** too prioritized its building needs and saw that top on the list were painting, carpeting, and window treatments followed by kitchen, restrooms, and covered drop-off. **Kernersville** upgraded its sound systems in its sanctuary and Historic Chapel, and with its two organs has rather become a recital and concert center. After five months of renovation, on October 4 **Home** Church was finally able to worship again in its *beautiful* 209-year-old sanctuary. Among the many projects was the big ticket one behind the scenes: a new heating/air-conditioning system to replace the 50-year-old one.

With all the new and refurbished buildings, the idea is to fill them up, and that is where we pew-sitters come in. For indeed we are the best growth engine of the Moravian Church. The Southern Province held its second "Invite a Friend" Sunday on October 18, and it was our opportunity to speak to a neighbor, coworker, friend, and help fill every pew in the Province. And we don't have to wait until one particular day. Each year has 52 Sundays, not to mention Wednesday fellowships, Saturday suppers, etc.

And we can be imaginative in our invitation to come to Christ. Can a pickup truck proclaiming the Moravian Church in a Christmas parade make a feature story in the newspaper? You bet it can. Way to go, **Fulp**.

Now on to a brand new future in 2010 as we tell everyone of the gospel of Christ.

— Richard W. Starbuck
Moravian Archives
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