



Presented to the clergy of the
Bethlehem, PA, Diocese
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EPISCOPAL/ANGLICAN AND MORAVIAN RELATIONSHIPS

I have seldom met
one who does not
hold surprise
and teach,
when I do listen:

Amazing experience,
and wisdom
embodied in life,
truly treasure,
when treasured.

Perhaps
each we meet
holds within
mystery, becomes
gift of God:

Wondrous wrappings,
ribboned with hope.
Amazing surprise within!
Marked “For You”.

Shall we open?
And
what is lost
if we do not?

From the beginnings of Christianity the core realities of the church are the real presence of the Christ who suffered for us and the Spirit. Both communicate the reality of God and the spiritual. This always occurs in historical, cultural, institutional and personal contexts and so the Church from the very beginning has been as varied as it is one. While we cherish our variety we constantly hear the call of God to live the oneness which belongs to our nature and are called to look deep into the life and witness of each other, to find there unique and important gifts. The Anglican and Moravian traditions have touched each other in the course of history more frequently than we of North America often realize. The time has come again to look within each other’s heart and see what we may be with and for each other and for the Christ we own as Lord. Let us look at what has happened and is happening.

The Fetter Lane Common Statement is a significant expression of agreement between the Church of England and the Moravian Church in Great Britain and Ireland. It is the result of conversations begun after the 1988 Lambeth Conference and concluded in May, 1995, at the Fetter Lane Moravian Church, Chelsea, London. That the Statement was named after the Fetter Lane Moravian Church was “felt to be particularly appropriate since the Fetter Lane Society, from which the congregation is descended, began in 1738 as a society founded for Anglicans and others by a Moravian, Peter Böhler (later pastor in Bethlehem, PA), and among whose membership were John Wesley and other future Methodist, Moravian and Anglican leaders who played a vital role in the Evangelical Revival.”¹

This Common Statement sprang from a long history of relationships of Moravians and Anglicans. The Moravian Church’s history is divided into three parts. The first extending from 1457 when a group

¹ . *Anglican-Moravian Conversations: The Fetter Lane Common Statement with Essays in Moravian and Anglican History*, London: The Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, Occasional Paper No. 5, 1996, Forward #3, p. 4.

formed to implement the teachings of John Hus, a Czech reformer, and sought to follow the Sermon on the Mount. Various stages of changing perspectives developed as the Church sought to be more a part of its society, established its ministry with intent for episcopal succession, and related to the developing sixteenth century reformation. Because of the Thirty Years War Moravians lost their right to institutional life in Bohemia and Moravia and their Church was not recognized in the Peace of Westphalia. Thus the institutional Moravian Church came to an end, with the exception of a few churches in Poland and the continuation of its episcopacy. The second period of the Church, 1620-1722, was then the “Time of the Hidden Seed” when the Church and its traditions survived in secret. The Moravian Bishop John Amos Comenius, considered the father of modern education, gave much of his life to keeping the insights of the Church alive and in his *Testament of the Dying Mother* (1650) entrusted them to the other churches. He visited England for nine months in 1641-2 and in his republication of the *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum* gave special attention to entrusting the Church’s heritage to the Church of England. In his Dedication to the Church of England he says:

To whom shall I leave our possessions? And have we any possessions, when all has been lost? Yes, by God’s gift we still own some things which may be willed to others; nor are friends and enemies wanting to whom such things may be left. To our enemies we leave what they have taken from us, or may yet take: our earthly goods – churches, land, schools and the like, and finally, if God, the ruler of all things, should see fit, the lives of those of us who are left; even as it pleased Christ, hanging on the cross, to allow His garments to be divided between the soldiers and Himself to be robbed of his earthly life.

But to you, our friends [the Church of England], we commit, according to the example of the same Divine Master, that which is far better, our dear mother, our Church herself. Take up the care of her now in our stead, whether God will deem her worthy to be revived in her native land, or let her die there and bring her to life again elsewhere. Even in her death, which now seems to be approaching, you ought to love her, because in her life she has gone before you, for over two centuries, with examples of faith and patience.²

The third period of the Moravian Church extends from 1722 to the present. This is called the time of the Renewed Moravian Church for the Ancient Moravian Church was revived on the estate of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in Saxony who, among other gifts, created a theology responsive to the issues of the Enlightenment.³ Influenced by the Pietist search for renewal he formed a largely Lutheran community on his estate which attracted others, including refugees from Bohemia and Moravia whose families remembered the Ancient Moravian Church. Here the Ancient Moravian Church was reborn within a religious community that included Lutheran and Reformed and was to include Anglicans in England. For 50 years the Moravian Church consisted of several “Ways/ Tropi” where each preserved the heritage of its own tradition. The episcopacy of the Ancient Moravian Church, which still survived in two Bishops, was perpetuated in the Renewed Moravian Church. Bishop Daniel Ernst Jablonsky, grandson of Comenius and at that time court preacher in Berlin, ordained the first two Bishops of the Renewed Moravian Church with the concurrence of the other Bishop of the Ancient Moravian Church.

Moravian interests soon turned to world mission in service of the Christ who was not only viewed as Savior but Creator of the world (e.g. John 1, Col. 1, Heb. 1) and thus foundation and initiator of all

² Ibid., p. 73, from J. A. Comenius, *de Bono Unitatis et Ordinis, Disciplinaeque ac Obedientiae in Ecclesia recte constituta vel constituenda Ecclesiae Bohemicae ad Anglicanam Paraensis*, Amsterdam: 1660, paras. 19-20.

³ Arthur Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, Bethlehem/Winston-Salem: Moravian Church, Interprovincial Board of Communication, 1998.

religious experience. It then became important to build relationships with the state churches of Europe and England which would facilitate these missions in areas where they were the vital religious presence. In Europe this meant especially the Lutherans in Denmark and the Church of England. Moravian missions began in 1732 on the Caribbean Island of St. Thomas, and then a mission of brief duration in the colony of Georgia in 1735 followed by a mission in northeastern Pennsylvania. The world-wide mission of the Moravian Church resulted in 19 provinces in Europe, Great Britain, North America, the Caribbean, Central America, India, Africa, South America, with an international membership of about 800,000, the largest Provinces being in Tanzania in East Central Africa. In North America Moravians presently number only 50,000, partially due to the fact that the North American Churches were primarily religious settlements (like Bethlehem and Lititz Pennsylvania and Salem NC) and were controlled from Europe until 1857. Thus for a long time they did not have the freedom to engage in home missions appropriate to the N. American context. But it must be said that during Zinzendorf's visit to N. America in 1741-2 there was a serious attempt to create an ecumenical "Congregation of God in the Spirit" which would include all religious communities interested. Though this effort lasted only about five years, Zinzendorf took back with him to Europe the understanding that each "Way" of being Christian could be joined into an ecumenical community and the Moravian Church from the 1740s to the 1790s included three religious traditions (Moravian, Lutheran and Reformed) and utilized confessionally both the Augsburg Confession and the Articles of the Synod of Berne and in England accepted the 39 Articles of the Church of England.

A process of seeking relationships with the Anglican Church was then begun which resulted in an Act of Parliament in 1749 recognizing the Moravian Church as an ancient episcopal church. Over time relationships were worked on, resulting in an Anglican-Moravian Dialogue in England from 1878-1936 which was initially somewhat related to mission fields in the Caribbean. However, the origin of Moravian orders in the 15th century and gaps in Episcopal succession left in question an unbreakable line of succession. Actually, in 1467 the Moravian Church sought the securing of a legitimate apostolic ministry and tried to secure an episcopal line which was difficult to maintain in times of persecution when leaders were imprisoned. It was also problematic that in the Moravian Church confirmation is often performed by Deacons and Presbyters and that Bishops do not have an administrative role.⁴ These issues were resolved in the Fetter Lane Statement by placing apostolic succession within "the continuity of the apostolic life and mission of the whole Church." Precedents for various patterns of ministry and for confirmation also by the local minister were recognized, as is the need "to face together how the three-fold ministry can be fully developed for the most effective witness of the Church in today's world."⁵

The 1989-95 Dialogue affirmed that the ecumenical task be pursued until all the separated churches achieve *full visible unity*, necessary because in the light of Canon and Parliamentary law there can only be one church and one episcopacy (not parallel episcopates) within the land, thus denying the possibility of *full communion* without visible unity. Yet visible unity was seen a future goal, not a present necessity, and on the way to that goal there would be "two interim stages: *visible unity between bilateral partners*, implying *inter alia* a reconciliation of ministries, and where that was not yet achievable such *preliminary steps towards visible unity* as two churches can agree in good conscience."⁶

⁴ "Towards Visible Unity: An account of the Anglican/Moravian Conversations up to August 1994" by Richard M. B. Connor. He relates information from his father, Bishop Samuel Connor, who represented the Moravian Church in this Dialogue.

⁵ *Anglican-Moravian Conversations: The Fetter Lane Common Statement with Essays in Moravian and Anglican History*, Section IV The Ordained Ministry of the Church, #35, p. 22.

⁶ Ibid., #7, pp. 4-5.

The Fetter Lane Agreement has now become the basis for extending Anglican/Episcopal and Moravian relationships. On November 7th 1998 representatives of the Church of England, the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Church signed the Fetter Lane Agreement in the Manchester Cathedral, viewing the implementation of the Agreement as largely to be worked out on a local level. Thus there has been “twinning” of five Moravian congregations with five Church of Ireland parishes and a commitment “to share a common life and mission” and to “take all possible steps to visible unity in as many areas of life and witness as possible” including: worship, common ministries available on basis of common baptism, ministry of authorized ministers in the other church, establishing of partnerships, invitations as observers to meetings of Bishops and synods, training candidates for ministry together where possible, sharing resources appropriately, appreciating the distinctive gifts of each tradition, and sharing insights of the Common Statement with Anglicans and Moravians in other parts of the world.⁷

At the discussion of the Fetter Lane Statement during the Anglican General Synod of 1996, mutual appreciation was shown. The Dean of Worcester (the Very Rev. Robert Jeffery) commented:

It was Zinzendorf who welcomed every step that brings us nearer the goal of unity with Christ. If we really want the healing of the unity of the Churches of the nations, our co-operation with the Moravian Church, whose devotion to the Lamb who conquers and whose concern for unity is so deep, cannot but assist the process. The commitment to unity is a test of whether we really believe in the Gospel or not.⁸

And the dialogue itself was recognized as contributing to the life and mission of the church. Mrs. Dorothy Chatterley commented:

Our Lord's high priestly prayer for the unity of his disciples as the visible reality of their life on earth must weigh on our minds, and our Churches must stand together against the slide into secularism and paganism that is so much a mark of current culture. We are called to explore patterns of working and witnessing together in order to advance the one mission of Christ. We do not know the way to the greater visible unity for which we hope but we do know that existing patterns of separation are not the way. What we have before us today is not an attempt to unite by eliminating doctrinal distinction; what is proposed is a co-operation among Christians who take doctrines very seriously indeed. The Anglican-Moravian conversations form a basis on which we can witness to a world in need, and we can pray, separately and together, that we may live in full unity and concord when and as it may please the Holy Spirit.⁹

In North America dialogue began even before the completion of the Fetter Lane Agreement and its availability as a model. In 1994 there developed a North Carolina Episcopal-Moravian Dialogue which originated in the informal conversations of the Rev. William McElveen (Moravian) and the Rev. Thomas Rightmyer (Episcopalian) during a meeting of the Committee on Christian Unity of the North Carolina Council of Churches. This one state venture was met with much enthusiasm and after meeting for several years a national dialogue was advocated by the group. The recommendation was approved by the Episcopal National Standing Committee on Ecumenical Relationships and by the Provincial Elders' Conferences of the two North American Moravian Provinces. It was subsequently approved by the

⁷ *The Fetter Lane Agreement, Church of Ireland and the Moravian Church, Guidelines and The Fetter Lane Declaration*, in manuscript form .

⁸ Responses to the Report (GS 1204) “A Stage on the Way to Visible Unity with the Moravian Church” of the Council for Christian Unity to the General Synod, July 1996; General Synod July Group of Sessions 1996, Report of Proceedings, Vol. 27, No. 2, Published by the General Synod of the Church of England, p. 361.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 360-361

General Convention of the Episcopal Church and by the synods of the two North American Provinces of the Moravian Church.

The national level dialogue was authorized and in 2000 had its first meeting in Winston-Salem, NC, on September 15-16, with the goal of “common Christian mission through full communion in faith, life and witness.”¹⁰ Locally the Rev. Jane Teter of the Bethlehem Diocese is a member of the Dialogue as is the Rev. Otto Dreydoppel, Professor of Church History at Moravian Seminary. The minutes of the Nov, 5-7, 2001, meeting state:

Present and future discussion within the Dialogue will focus on: the episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate in our two communions; on how the Moravian episcopate might be received in the Episcopal Church and the Episcopal episcopate in the Moravian Church; on convergences in liturgical theology and practice; and on practical programs like educational, children’s, and social service ministries, in which the two church bodies could begin to collaborate immediately.¹¹

Meanwhile the North Carolina Dialogue continues. It has broadened to include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, since both the Episcopal and Moravian Churches are in Full Communion with the ELCA. This group now considers itself less a dialogue group--since that takes place at the national level--and more of an "implementation" group working to enhance the witness and mission of the three denominations in North Carolina. Already there have been two successful Episcopal-Lutheran-Moravian(ELM) Conferences held {February 2001 and February 2002} to encourage clergy and lay people from the three churches to get to know each other and to get on with our common mission. An ELM Conference III is being planned for February 2003 in which functioning models of working together will be shared.

What We Share (briefly described):¹²

We each belong to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God. Above all we share the reality of God and our Lord Christ which shapes the life of our churches and our oneness with each other.

Moravians have been and are very Christocentric for it is in Christ that the reality of God is expressed and the Trinity is communicated and defined. Though Christocentric, Moravians have always confessed the whole Trinity, as emphasized in their statement about Scripture in their confession (*The Ground of the Unity*):

The Triune God as revealed in the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments is the only source of our life and salvation, and this Scripture is the sole standard of the doctrine and faith of the Unitas Fratrum and therefore shapes our life.¹³

¹⁰ Report on the Moravian Episcopal Dialogue, Winston-Salem, NC, Sept. 15-16, 2000.

¹¹ Report on the Moravian Episcopal Dialogue, Bethlehem, PA, November 5-7, 2001

¹² A summary by the writer.

¹³ *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum (Moravian Church)* 1995, published by order of the Unity Synod held at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 13th to 25th August, 1995, p. 14. Taken from the *Ground of the Unity*, a Moravian confession, originating in 1957, last revised in 1995.

This wording was developed with careful attention in an international debate within the Moravian Church about the nature of Scripture’s authority in 1993-5. See Arthur Freeman, *The Understanding of Scripture in the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum), With Special Consideration of Historic Descriptions of Scripture, the History of the Statement about Scripture in the Ground of the Unity, 1957, the Debate about Scripture in the Northern Province, 1993-1995, and Changes to the Ground*

We both recognize the importance of liturgy. For Moravians it is the language of the church which reflects all that calls to faith and expresses faith and gives us a place to live into and voice this reality. In a sense the Moravian Church has many liturgies, often directed to significant occasions and topics (see the *Moravian Book of Worship*). And yet while the over-all worship has a regular form, for most services liturgies are placed within the total worship as portions of it. Such liturgies call to mind traditional creeds (Apostles and Nicene), prayers (especially the Lord's Prayer), and call to confession, prayer and profession according to the occasion. The Moravian Church follows the Common Lectionary.

What many Moravians would experience, more than articulate, is that worship and hymns carry a reality which is beyond words and call us to what transcends the words. For example, the writing of hymns was encouraged for all in the 18th century and some services, such as Eucharist and Love Feast, have their total meaning communicated in hymns. There was also much experimentation in liturgy. This awareness of the transcendent is what makes liturgy cross over from the variety of verbal expression possible in different traditions to an experience which transcends words. In the language of the 18th century Moravian Church there were Moravian, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican theologies, but church/community theology (*Gemeintheologie*) arose from the hearts of those participating and the shared reality made it unnecessary to attempt to explain shades and implications of meaning. All, from whatever background they came, knew in their hearts what all this meant.

We are both international churches, though organized somewhat differently. The Moravian Church is international, organized into 19 Provinces, with an international Unity Board and Synod ("Unity" is the commonly used designation for the international Church). Each Province has a fair measure of autonomy but in matters of doctrine, mission, and organization the approval of the Unity Synod is necessary. Thus there have been bilateral dialogues between Moravians and Anglicans/Episcopalians in England, Ireland, and North America. Though Anglicans do not have an international structure, their 32 autonomous churches, besides being bound by a common tradition, do have as "bonds of communion" the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Meeting of Primates.

We each have an episcopacy which we value and maintain, though the Moravian episcopacy has more to do with ordaining pastors, pastoring pastors, pastoring the church, and maintaining succession of ministry than administration. A few Moravian provinces do have administrative Bishops, according to local custom. Many affirm the value of this system of care apart from administrative supervision. The Moravian orders are: ordination to the Deaconate giving full ordination rights and embodying the idea of ministry as service, consecration to the Presbyterate in which pastor and congregation reaffirm their ministries, and consecration to the Episcopate. That the Deaconate is the only ordination indicates that its implications continue at all levels of the orders and that the other orders are distinctions regarding forms and functions of ministry rather than essence. Episcopalians and Moravians need to face together how the three-fold ministry may be continued and developed.

of the Unity Effected by the Synods 1994-5, unpublished, 1996, to be found in Moravian Archives and the library of Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem. Also, in the 18th century there was much Moravian exploration of the role of the Holy Spirit where the Spirit was often described as Mother of the Church (part of a search for experiential language).

We accept the authority of Scripture and the value of reason, experience and tradition. We accept the Niceno-Constantinopolitan and Apostles Creeds.¹⁴

We believe in Baptism as the sacrament of union with the death and resurrection of Christ which initiates the one baptized into the church, and we follow baptism of infants with Confirmation. We believe in the celebration of the Eucharist in which Christ is really present to share his risen life with us.

We believe that by grace, through faith, we are made righteous before God, which justification leads to good works and love.

Offered in loving memory of the Rev. Charles Francis Whiston, Episcopal Priest and Prof. of Systematic Theology, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Director of the Lilly Endowment Project for the Deepening of the Spiritual Life of the Seminary Faculty begun in 1964, one of the initial efforts in the modern Spiritual Formation movement which eventuated in the advocacy of the Association of Theological Schools that Spiritual Formation be taught as a regular element of the curriculum. The project felt the need to direct its program towards the faculty rather than the students that "they might teach, train and discipline the theological students in the life of prayer, the life in which second-hand knowledge about God passes over into first-hand experiential encounter with the living God." (Final Report, 1970) This Project eventuated in the National Tryst Fellowship of seminary faculty which met until 1977. It is in this project and the Tryst Fellowship that I began to understand the role of the teaching of prayer and spirituality in the Seminary curriculum and developed a course which I taught for 25 years at Moravian Theological Seminary. For this I remain deeply indebted to Charles Whiston and his wife Jane who were my mentors and friends for many years.

¹⁴ As stated in the *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum (Moravian Church)* 1995, published by order of the Unity Synod held at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 13th to 25th August, 1995, p. 14-15. Taken from the *Ground of the Unity*, a Moravian confession, originating in 1957, last revised in 1995:

#5. The Unitas Fratrum recognizes in the creeds of the Church the thankful acclaim of the Body of Christ. These creeds aid the Church in formulating a Scriptural confession, in marking the boundary of heresies, and in exhorting believers to an obedient and fearless testimony in every age. The Unitas Fratrum maintains that all creeds formulated by the Christian Church stand in need of constant testing in the light of the Holy Scriptures. It acknowledges as such true professions of faith the early Christian witness: "Jesus Christ is Lord!" and also especially the ancient Christian creeds and the fundamental creeds of the Reformation*.

*Note: In the various Provinces of the Renewed Unitas Fratrum the following creeds in particular gained special importance, because in them the main doctrines of the Christian faith find clear and simple expression:

- The Apostles' Creed
- The Athanasian Creed
- The Nicene Creed
- The Confession of the Unity of the Bohemian Brethren of 1662
- The Twenty-One Articles of the unaltered Augsburg Confession
- The Shorter Catechism of Martin Luther
- The Synod of Berne of 1532
- The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England
- The Theological Declaration of Barmen of 1934
- The Heidelberg Catechism