

In ancient Judah, there was a time of theological confusion and error that angered God. God then *“sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”*

(Ezekiel 22:30; NKJV)

For the past six years, the Concerned Moravians have attempted to man the wall and *“contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”*

(Jude 1:3[b]; NIV).

It’s been about 2 years since the leaders of Concerned Moravians have summarized and communicated a progress report. I have prayed for the Holy Spirit to give me the right words to speak to you today. My comments today are not intended to be divisive in the body of Christ. Rather, they are intended to be edifying for the building up of the faith.

With the Covid-19 pandemic and the Moravian Church Southern Province 2022 Synod in the rear-view mirror, the Concerned Moravian leadership commenced a new visioning process in October 2022. This proved to be a multi-month endeavor with much discernment and discussion. By the beginning of 2023, agreement was reached and plans put into place.

COMMUNICATION

Communicating information and dialoguing with you, your sisters and brothers in the pews, and with the Moravian Church Southern Province has been extremely important. We have endeavored to do this in various ways, and to emphasize topics of concern in addition to those surrounding Resolution 14.

[Emails/mailings/website/advertisements](#)

Effective communication is not an easy task. For Concerned Moravians, it requires multiple forms of communication (emails, letters, advertisements, and information on our website), along with maintaining an electronic database – all of which is time-consuming.

If you have not checked the website lately, I recommend you click on the [Reflections Page](#) on the Concerned Moravian’s website. There, you will find letters, sermons, commentaries, and videos that are pertinent to our mission and vision from both Moravians and non-Moravians, pastors, and laity.

We know that the use of texting and use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) are successful tools used by many organizations. This warrants further exploration, and if you know of someone with technological experience and time who could assist us with making this happen, we would love to talk with you.

We continue to search for effective means to get information to those sisters and brothers who sit in our church pews alongside you. We have even thought about messaging the flock via highway billboards! We agree with those of you who have suggested we get contact information from every church. That has been a challenge for us as churches view their membership directories as private, protected information which they are reluctant to share.

However, the best method of getting information to those who sit with you on your pew continues to be: **YOU!** You -- talking one-on-one with your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

Publications, Speakers, & Movies:

Publications:

Some topics have been simply too vast for these previously described forms of communication.

During this past period, Bill Barham published his book, "*The Moravian Repair Manual*", which provides guidance to the laity in the pews how to contend for Christ's church within one's own Moravian congregation. The reader may request a copy of Bill Barham's book by clicking on the [Contact Us](#) tab of the *Concerned Moravians'* website and submitting a request.

Marcia Tabram Phillips also published her work, "*Is the Bible Essential? Is Jesus the Way to Salvation?*" Her book is available via Amazon.

Speakers:

Eric Metaxas:

In an attempt to educate you, other Moravians, and other Christians, we were blessed to secure known author and speaker, Eric Metaxas¹, to speak at Bethabara Moravian Church in March 2023 concerning his new book, ***Letter to the American Church***.

¹ Eric Metaxas: bestselling author of 14 books including *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*; *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*; *If you can Keep It: The Forgotten Promise of American Liberty*.

If you attended, then you know that the sanctuary was packed with people, Moravians and non-Moravians, members of the community and members of our PEC. Mr. Metaxas' presentation was both educational and highly entertaining. The point of Metaxas' presentation and his book was to sound the alarm to a sleeping American church (including the Moravian Church) to WAKE UP to the darkness encircling us! He believes that, like the pre-WWII German church, the American church has often appeased and abetted doctrines threatening the traditional Christian church rather than boldly stand firm in the faith.

I think we Moravians all 'puffed out our chests' a little more when Metaxas told us the story that his mother's nanny was a Moravian.

But, how did you feel when he stated that of the 18,000 pastors in Nazi Germany, 12,000 chose "to sit on the sidelines and do nothing ... to see which way the wind was blowing, so to speak?"²

Were you, like me, curious to know which side of the fence the Moravian pastors were on?

I went looking for an answer and found it in C. Daniel Crew's book, "***With Courage for the Future: The Story of the Moravian Church, Southern Province.***" From his account of the German Moravian Church during the war, Rev. Crews writes:

"The PEC received its first communication direct from Moravian leaders in Germany in June 1946. In a heart-rending letter, the German Moravian leaders said that the church there should have done more to resist the Nazis:

*"We are ashamed that in this time in which antichrist has raised its head among us, our Church, as oppressed as it was, did not become a martyr church as in the days of our fathers."*³

The takeaway from Metaxas' book to the American Church is a warning, a wake-up call. The same forces are at work today that were afoot in the early 20th Century, and specifically in Germany in the 1930's.

² Metaxas, Eric, *Letter to the American Church* (Washington, DC, Salem Books, 2022), 43.

³ Crews, C. Daniel, *With Courage for the Future, the Story of the Moravian Church, Southern Province* (Winston-Salem, NC, Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 583.

Movies:

For any who may have missed Metaxas in person, Bethabara Moravian Church hosted a docu-drama encore presentation of ***Letter to the American Church*** with dinner and a showing of the movie on May 18th of this year. This well attended event even sparked members of Friedberg Moravian Church to also show the movie to their congregation.

More recently in September of this year, the Bethabara congregation again provided the venue for the showing of the ***1916 Project Movie***. Calling upon God's mandate to be "salt and light" in a dark world, Bethabara invited not only Moravian churches and other churches in the community, but reached out to Bible study groups and the Concerned Moravians – asking that the word get passed on to other groups.

I hope you were in attendance that night. But, if you were not, I highly encourage you to read the book or see the movie when it is released to theatres. It traces how much of the anti-God culture we are witnessing today has grown from seeds sown at the turn of the 20th century.

This event drew an audience of people from a variety of churches and organizations, including those advocating for life and the family. In fact, there were more non-Moravians than Moravians in attendance. The ***1916 Project Movie*** website listed all the churches showing the movie and Bethabara was one of only two in the entire state of North Carolina to hold such an event. There were people who had driven 2-3 hours to be present for the viewing.

After the movie, a time for audience comments was held and there was a "hunger" expressed from other churches desiring to work collaboratively and collectively with Bethabara Moravian Church to "DO" something to right this ship.

OUR VISION WITH RESPECT TO THE MORAVIAN CHURCH in AMERICA, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

The PEC's position has been to draw a clear wall between themselves and the Concerned Moravians because they view us as "an independent group" and not a recognized group within the Provincial structure.

As Concerned Moravians, we have not seen ourselves as an unrelated, external, independent group but rather as a '*we the people*' of the *Moravian Church* – concerned members of the body of Christ -- related and relevant regardless of the Provincial Administration's definition. Therefore, *the Concerned Moravian* leaders continued to seek opportunities to communicate with the PEC.

In the Fall of 2022, one of our leaders reached out to the PEC President asking for an explanation as to why ...

- 1) none of the resolutions passed at the 2018 and 2022 Synods had been incorporated into the *Moravian Church Southern Province Book of Order* as required by such book of order. Only the *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum* had been included, and
- 2) given Synod 2022 had passed a resolution affirming the Bible was essential, what was going to be done to correct the latest published catechism's stance regarding the Bible?

[If you will recall, Synod 2018 passed a resolution allowing each congregation to determine if marriage of same-sex couples and use of homosexual clergy would be permitted in that congregation.

Synod 2022 passed a resolution that the Bible was essential. The 2020 published catechism booklet did not list the Bible under "the Essentials" but rather was listed as a "Ministerial".]

The response received was that the PEC was '*working on the changes and they hoped to have the changes finished in December 2022.*'

To date, the 2018 version of the *Moravian Church Southern Province Book of Order* remains the one published on the Moravian Church Southern Province website, and the website's version of the catechism remains as finalized in 2020.

You might ask, "*So, what's the big deal?*"

The reason we keep pursuing this line of questioning is that as Concerned Moravians, what we desire for is a return to conformity of our *Book of Order* and catechism with the (1) Holy Bible, (2) the Moravian Church's *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum*, and (3) Christianity based on Scripture!

But, with a 'wall of separation' established by the PEC between themselves and the Concerned Moravians, and communication from the PEC minimized, it was concluded that there was no Provincial avenue left to reconcile these issues. An appeal to the Unity was the last resort.

Submitting a *resolution* to Unity Synod for consideration was *not* available to us as only delegates can propose resolutions to Unity Synod. Therefore, six Concerned Moravians, moved by the Holy Spirit, committed their personal time, talent, and financial resources to fly to Cape Town, South Africa and be Synod observers.

You need to understand how significant an effort this was. The Unity did not publish the dates for Unity Synod until about 4 months prior to the event. This is not a lot of lead time to plan a trip to another continent.

Earlier in 2023, Rev. Nan Crews had provided instruction to the Concerned Moravian leadership on the importance of 'prayer' along with numerous resources, challenging us to set up small prayer groups in our homes.

Recognizing the importance of Unity Synod, Bethabara Moravian Church once again took the lead and held an intra-provincial service of worship and prayer for Unity Synod calling upon the LORD to: (1) place a hedge of protection around all the attendees, (2) pray for transitions, and (3) pray for new leaders to arise.

Upon reaching Cape Town, the group of six Concerned Moravians hoped an opportunity where delegates could refresh themselves and dialogue informally with their group would be appreciated by the delegates and Unity leaders.

However, the Unity Administrator sent word to all the delegates *to NOT visit* the hospitality room that had been set up. Therefore, attendance was sparse and little dialogue with delegates occurred.

[It is noted that we have heard informally that there were indeed three resolutions submitted to Unity Synod regarding homosexual marriage. It is our understanding that all three resolutions failed to make it out of committee.]

Toward the end of Synod, 3 of the 5 members of the Unity's Executive Committee invited the group to a restaurant luncheon meeting. These 3 Executive Committee members included:

- Roberta Hoey, President of the Unity Board (representing Europe),
- Neil Routh, President of the MCSP PEC (representing America), and
- Jørgen Bøytler, the Unity Administrator.

Not in attendance were Leopold Pixley (representing Latin America), and Errod Simae (representing Africa) who have generally been considered to be more conservative adherents of traditional Christian orthodoxy. Their absence from this meeting has remained puzzling.

Based on the testimonials of our six members in attendance, I think I can describe this meeting as "*passionate and lively*". I have also heard these 6 Concerned Moravians described as "Rock Stars" and that they clearly explained our position and mission.

The take-aways from this meeting were:

- 1) The *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum* is treated more as "guidelines" than a foundational set of denominational principles or doctrine, and
- 2) At the urging of the Unity President, the Moravian Church Southern Province President offered the team of 6 a meeting with the Southern Province PEC upon return home.

That follow-up meeting occurred in October 2023.

Hebrews 4:12 says,

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (NKJV)

I mention this because there was apparently a fair amount of ‘*spiritual sword fighting*’ between the two parties at the table that day as Scripture verses were bandied back and forth.

The meeting concluded with a major question asked by The PEC President: “*How can the Concerned Moravians and the Moravian Church exist together?*”

That question clearly envisioned further dialogue, but no further invitation to dialogue with the PEC on these matters has been received.

That was a year ago.

So, here we stand.

At a crossroad.

This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” Jeremiah 6:16[a] (NIV)

At this point, Jill Carter assumed the podium and made her presentation.

Libby Ayers’ concluding remarks appear on the following pages.

C. Daniel Crews writes in his book, ***With Courage for the Future: The Story of the Moravian Church, Southern Province***, that Moravians here in the Southern Province were concerned as early as “*the 1908 Synod [which] voted its “concurrence” with the traditional doctrinal position of the Moravian Church. Specifically, Synod asserted abiding faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior, and confirmed that Holy Scripture would remain “the only rule of our faith and practice.”*”⁴

Why were they concerned?

Crews writes, [there were] “*some proposals slated to come before the General Synod of 1909 which, if adopted, would have abridged the Unity’s doctrinal statements considerably, and some would have had the church move toward the “new theology” then current in academic circles in Europe and to some extent in America.*”⁵

And what was this “*new theology*” making the rounds of those German seminaries as well in some circles within America?

Very briefly:

- (1) Liberal theology viewed God’s character as one of pure benevolence and thus without wrath. All people will be saved. Thus, the need for salvation, a Savior, or redemption was denied.
- (2) Liberalism believed there is a divine spark in every man and woman. Therefore, humanity is basically good, not sinful, and the doctrine of original sin was denied.
- (3) Liberalism viewed Jesus Christ as Savior only in the sense that He was our perfect teacher and example.
- (4) Liberalism believed that just as Christ differs from other men only comparatively and not absolutely or substantively, neither does Christianity differ from other religions.
- (5) Finally, liberalism affirmed that the Bible was not a divine record of revelation, but merely a human record of the religious experiences of a nation and a people. Thus, few if any doctrinal statements or creeds are essential to Christianity. The things of lasting importance and worth salvaging in the Christian message were the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus. Here, the Bible is seen only as a collection of human writings. It is not the divinely revealed Word of God. It is merely

⁴ Crews, C. Daniel, *With Courage for the Future, the Story of the Moravian Church, Southern Province* (Winston-Salem, NC, Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 472.

⁵ Ibid.

a historical record, not a revelatory Word. Thus, the authority of Scripture was denied.⁶

Today, we recognize this *new theology* as ‘theological liberalism’.

Thankfully, “The 1909 General Synod did indeed reaffirm the Moravian Church’s traditional doctrinal positions.”⁷ But, I say to you: I have heard whispers of this ‘new theology’ from the pulpits of some of our Moravian churches. Have you?

I encourage you to also *closely* read Daniel Crew’s recount of the 1957 Unity Synod, the first to meet since 1931 and the Synod that produced the *Ground of the Unity*.⁸ Dialogue and debate regarding this ‘*new theology*’ was continuing to circulate among delegates.

So, here we are, 115 years after 1909 and this “new theology” has wormed its way into the mainline Christian denominations (including the Moravian Church), perniciously metastasizing, and has been the cause for the splits of most all of those denominations including, most recently, the Methodist Church.

Recall my earlier statement that one of the observations by the six members who went to South Africa is that *the Church Orders of the Unitas Fratrum* is no longer a set of foundational doctrines but rather, perceived as “guidelines”.

The roots of our denomination’s growing apostasy can be traced back to the “new theology” percolating in European and American seminaries by the beginning of the 20th Century, and the fruit can be heard in some of our church’s pulpits and that fruit is rotten at its core.

No one leader is going to get us out of this entirely --- other than our Lord Jesus Christ when he returns to rule and reign on this earth in *His* kingdom!

What then, can you do while we wait for Him?

2nd Chronicles 7:14, the LORD says, “*If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*” (NIV)

⁶ Heidinger II, James V. *The Rise of Theological Liberalism and the Decline of American Methodism*, “5 Marks of Theological Liberalism.” Posted June 19, 2017. www.Seedbed.com [5 Marks of Theological Liberalism - Seedbed](#). Accessed September 29, 2024.

⁷Crews, *With Courage for the Future*, 472.

⁸Crews, C. Daniel. “Confessing Our Unity in Christ: Studying the historical and theological background to *The Ground of the Unity* – Moravian Church In America.” Posted July 2018. www.Moravian.org. Accessed October 4, 2024.

First, we, the Church, *must repent.*

We *must pray and pray earnestly.*

Then, we *must stand!*

And we *must fight and put on the whole armor of God!*

10-12 ... God is strong, and he wants you strong. So, take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no weekend war that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

13-18 Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out. [Eph 6:10-18, The Message Bible]

Repenting, praying, standing firm, and contending for the faith are the only answers to us getting out of this dark culture in which we find ourselves immersed.

'Culture' is downstream of the Church and if the Church is anemic on moral issues, then evil will fill the cultural vacuum. "How we got here today is the result of silence and inaction of the church."⁹

As we have seen, when faith, morality, and values from God's Holy Scriptures are not taught from the pulpits of the Judeo-Christian Church, the consequences for our society are dire.

⁹ Metaxas, Eric. *YouTube: The 1916 Project: Official First Trailer*. minute mark: 29

For this is what the LORD says:

¹⁹See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up;

do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland.

^{20(b)}to give drink to my people, my chosen,

²¹ the people I formed for myself

that they may proclaim my praise!

Isaiah 43:19, 20(b), 21 (NIV)

Amen and Amen.