

**Commentary and Executive Summary of “Finding Our Delight in the Lord”  
A Proposal for Full Communion between the Moravian Church and the Episcopal Church**

**Introduction**

At its October, 2007 meeting the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations of the Episcopal Church reviewed Draft 14 of “Finding Our Delight in the Lord,” the proposal for full communion between the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church in America, Northern and Southern Provinces. The Standing Commission accepted the document and recommended it be forwarded for possible consideration to the 2009 General Convention. The Commission also requested that a process for consultation and communication be developed. The Provincial Elders’ Conferences (the governing bodies in between meetings of Provincial Synods) of the Northern Province and Southern Province of the Moravian Church met and approved Draft 14, forwarded it to their respective Synods in 2010 for consideration, and also requested that additional supplemental materials be produced to assist the churches in studying this proposal. Both the Standing Commission and Provincial Elders’ Conferences had seen previous drafts and had the opportunity to provide feedback. In addition, the Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER) has been regularly updated on the progress of this dialogue. Now that it has been received by the relevant bodies of oversight, a copy of this proposal will be forwarded to IASCER for discussion as well.

Accordingly this Executive Summary and Commentary has been drafted to facilitate reception and discussion of “Finding Our Delight in the Lord.” Additional materials are also being produced by the dialogue team.

For the Episcopal Church, the Standing Commission will decide at its October 2008 meeting to take the final steps towards forwarding this document to the 2009 General Convention. A process of consultation including the EDEIO network, House of Bishops’ Theology Committee, and seminary faculties (among others) is underway.

***Commentary and Summary of “Finding our Delight”***

**I. Preface**

There are two main goals of the Preface.

One goal is to set out the reasons for entering into this full communion proposal. At first this may seem obvious, but while we have the foundations on which we seek ecumenical relationships, the dialogue team felt that we needed to state the underlying reasons. The quotation from Archbishop Temple outlines these reasons: first, the fact that our divisions obscure our witness to the Gospel; and second, that because of our divisions we are not quite whole, and have been deprived of the spiritual gifts and treasures of others. These are principles which we feel cannot be restated enough, and are a call to our churches continually to acknowledge the scandals of our divisions.

The Preface also notes that full communion is not an end in and of itself – we seek this relationship so that our mission may be fulfilled more effectively, and that we might be more complete in drawing from the spiritual treasures of one another's communions.

The second main goal of the Preface is to note the foundations of our ecumenical engagement. For Moravians, it is the ecumenical vision of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, perhaps the most prominent bishop and theologian of the Moravian Church. Zinzendorf's theology informed the foundational statement of the Moravian Church, The Ground of the Unity, which is an essential component to the Moravian Church's ecumenical commitment. For Episcopalians, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral is foundational.

## II. Introduction

The Introduction provides the historical background to the dialogue. There are several ways in which the background to the dialogue has helped lay the groundwork for the current proposal of full communion.

- Agreement on the first three points of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has been reached. The proposal for interim eucharistic sharing approved by both churches recognized one another as members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. In addition, the resolution included an agreed theological statement, drawn from the Church of England-Moravian Church conversations.
- Therefore, in order to move towards full communions, as Episcopalians we must have agreement on sharing in the historic episcopate, the fourth point of the Quadrilateral. This is the task that the dialogue team set for itself in the 2003-2006 triennium.
- The definition of full communion is provided. This is the definition from *Called to Common Mission*, with the final line asking each church being open to the encouragement and admonition of the other drawn from the *Formula of Agreement* between the ELCA and churches of the reformed tradition.

The rest of the introductory section is devoted to further explication of the foundational ecumenical stances of our churches first noted in the introduction. ¶ 5 focuses on *The Ground of the Unity* (hereafter *GOU*), a statement endorsed and adopted by the member provinces of the Moravian Church. The *GOU* notes that Moravians believe ecumenical engagement is “laid on them as a charge”, and that unity is something given by God which we are called to realize. ¶ 6 outlines the four points of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral: 1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God; 2) The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith; 3) The two Sacraments --Baptism and the Supper of the Lord --ministered with unflinching use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him; and 4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

## III. Foundational Principles

Section III begins the discussion of interchangeability of ministries, beginning first with presenting the ways in which oversight or episcopate is expressed in both of our churches.

A. *Oversight* ¶ 8: The discussion notes that a ministry of oversight is something which is exercised by the church as a whole, and that it is exercised both by individuals and conferentially with representative bodies. The paragraph then goes on to discuss the various elected bodies -- General Convention, diocesan Standing Committees, diocesan conventions, and parish vestries -- that exercise this function of oversight.

In addition, both churches have bishops ordained in an historic succession and which provide oversight to the church. However, the way in which that oversight is expressed is different. In the Moravian Church, bishops exercise a ministry of oversight primarily in a pastoral and consultative way. They only exercise administrative oversight if elected to a representative body such as the Provincial Elders' Conferences which govern the provinces of the church. In the Episcopal Church, bishops exercise administrative oversight as well as pastoral and consultative oversight as a function of their office.

There is significant convergence in how oversight is exercised in both churches, despite these differences in the office of bishop.

The section then goes on to discuss the orders of ministry in the two churches. ¶ 9-13 discuss the ministries of lay persons, deacons, presbyters, and bishops. These paragraphs are drawn from similar language in the *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* document endorsed by the 1985 General Convention as adapted by the Consultation on Church Union's *Consensus* document; the *Book of Common Prayer*; the *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum*; and the Fetter Lane Agreed statement between the Church of England and the Moravian Church in Great Britain. The only matter which the dialogue identified as warranting further discussion is on the ministry of deacons, otherwise there is consensus on the understanding of the offices of ordained ministry.

B. *Ministry of Deacons*

Both churches have deacons, presbyters, and bishops. However, the Moravian Church has implemented the threefold ministry in a different fashion than the Episcopal Church. In the ancient *Unitas Fratrum* (1457-1722), deacons functioned much as they do in the Episcopal Church and the broader catholic tradition -- as ministers of servanthood, connected with the bishop, and not presiding at the sacraments. However, with the renewal of the Moravian Church in the 1700s, under heavy influence from the German Lutheran state church (with emphasis on the one office of pastoral ministry), the office of deacon was adapted to include presidency at the sacraments. The ordination rite of the Moravian Church since that time clearly demonstrates the intent to ordain deacons to a sacramental ministry. Thus in the Moravian Church deacons celebrate communion, preside at baptism, and are pastors of congregations. ¶ 11 acknowledges these differences. In the Episcopal Church, deacons do not preside at the sacraments nor serve as pastors of congregations. In addition, there are persons ordained to the diaconate with no

intention of later being ordained to the presbyterate, for which there is no parallel in the Moravian Church.

Later in the document, in ¶ 31, this agreement states that should both churches enter into full communion, the ministry of deacons will not be interchangeable given these differences. The agreement is an attempt to lay out the understanding of the diaconate in our two traditions and to honor those developments.

#### **IV. Ministry of Bishops**

It is important to note that the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral lists the requirement of the historic episcopate, locally adapted, as necessary for entering into full communion with the Episcopal Church. Similarly, the *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum* speaks of the office of bishop as representing “the vital unity of the church and the continuity of the church’s ministry.” Section IV thus goes into greater detail on the two churches’ understanding of the historic episcopate in the context of full communion.

¶ 16-17 state the two churches’ agreement on the office of bishop.

¶ 18-19 state the two churches’ intent to maintain the office of bishop. In the Episcopal Church, this intention is demonstrated by the adaptation of the office of bishop as received from the Church of England for the context of a disestablished church in the new American republic. For the Moravian Church, this intention is demonstrated by the choice in 1467 to select persons to receive episcopal consecration. The source of this initial consecration is simply not possible to determine. Nonetheless, the intention is further demonstrated through the valiant and faithful efforts of the Moravian Church to continue to ordain their bishops in a succession, in the face of persistent persecution nearly to the point of extinction.

¶ 20 notes that the renewed Moravian Church (post-1722) demonstrated this intention through the consecrating of bishops from the last remaining Moravian bishop and by continuing to ordain its bishops in a historic succession up to the present day. ¶ 21 provides additional discussion of the way in which the office of bishop has been adapted by the Moravian Church, particularly noting the way in which Moravians hold to the notion that Christ is the only Head of the church.

¶ 24 concludes by noting that both churches have locally adapted the office of bishop for the sake of mission. Section V then moves to a discussion of how the two churches will share in that ministry of bishops.

#### **V. Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries**

This is divided into four sections:

- a) actions of both churches
- b) actions of the Episcopal Church to allow for interchangeable ministry of presbyters
- c) actions of the Moravian Church to allow for interchangeable ministry of presbyters

- d) interchangeability of deacons
- a) *Actions of both churches*

¶ 25-28 outline a process for reconciling the ministry of bishops in both churches, with each church making similar pledges, commitments, and acknowledgments.

In ¶ 25 each churches pledges to seek to receive the gifts of episcopal ministry that the other offers. The Episcopal Church recognizes the special emphasis in the Moravian Church on the pastoral and consultative aspects of oversight that Moravian bishops exercise. The Moravian Church recognizes that the Episcopal Church has maintained a succession of apostolic faith and historic episcopate which the Moravian Church sees as important in the continuation of its own ministry.

In ¶ 26 the Episcopal Church acknowledges that Moravian bishops are within the parameters of the historic episcopate, locally adapted. The Moravian Church recognizes that Episcopal bishops are consecrated to ministries of oversight exercised in different ways in the Moravian Church.

***Excursus: A brief discussion of the reconciliation and recognition of ministries.*** In the Episcopal Church, full communion involves interchangeability of ministries for the sake of mission and witness. This involves recognizing the ministries of another church as authentic. However, the Episcopal Church also has Constitutional restrictions on who may exercise ministry in this church, even in those churches whose ministry we recognize as authentic (such as Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches). **Recognition** formally acknowledges the ministries of another church. **Reconciliation** involves the removal of all restrictions to allow for service in one another's churches.

¶ 27 outlines the process for reconciliation and recognition of episcopal ministries. A ceremony celebrating and inaugurating full communion will follow approval of this document, planned by an appropriate commission. This ceremony will involve representative ministers of oversight and members of those bodies which exercise oversight in the churches, as well as lay persons, deacons, presbyters, and bishops.

This ceremony will include bishops in good standing in the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church. From the Episcopal Church, the Presiding Bishop, bishops from dioceses with Moravian congregations, and at least one bishop from each of the nine provinces of the Episcopal Church will attend. As a sign of our mutual full communion relationship, bishops of the ELCA, including the Presiding Bishop, will be invited. Likewise, since we are members of global communions, bishops from other provinces of the Moravian Church and the Anglican Communion will also be invited.

¶ 27.i. Describes the process of reconciliation of episcopal ministries, which will include a mutual laying-on of hands, with the same words and same liturgical actions. Episcopal bishops

will kneel before the Moravian bishops. The Moravian bishops will lay hands on them and pray the following prayer:

Eternal God, with thanksgiving we acknowledge the ministry these servants have already received and exercised, and we ask you through your Holy Spirit to bestow upon them the grace and authority as understood and required by this church for the exercise of the ministry of a bishop, for the sake of the unity of the church, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

The Moravian bishops will then pray the following blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Episcopal bishops will then stand, and the Moravian bishops will offer them the right hand of fellowship.

The concluding section of paragraph 27.i. describes the reasons for these actions and prayers. In the Moravian Church, clergy from other denominations are received into the ministry through the praying of the Aaronic blessing and the giving of the right hand of fellowship. The final sentence of this section states that “Through these actions, Episcopal bishops present will be understood to have been welcomed into fellowship with those who sustained a witness of unity and fidelity to the gospel since 1457 as the *Unitas Fratrum*.” Thus the ministry of bishops in the Episcopal Church will be understood to have been accepted by the Moravian Church.

¶ 27.ii. continues this description of reconciliation of episcopal ministries. The Moravian bishops will then kneel before the Episcopal bishops, who will lay hands on them and pray:

Eternal God, with thanksgiving we acknowledge the ministry these servants have already received and exercised, and we ask you through your Holy Spirit to bestow upon them the grace and authority as understood and required by this church for the exercise of the ministry of a bishop, for the sake of the unity of the church, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

The Episcopal bishops will then pray the same blessing used by Moravian bishops:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Episcopal bishops will then stand, and the peace will be exchanged, since the giving of the right hand of fellowship is not something that is part of the tradition Episcopal Church. In the Episcopal Church, clergy from other denominations may be received through laying on of hands by a bishop and with a prayer acknowledging the ministry that have exercised and granting the

authority to exercise that ministry as the Episcopal Church understands it. The prayer used in this ceremony is the one adapted from Title III, Canon 10.

The concluding sentence of ¶ 27.ii states that through these actions the Episcopal Church understands those Moravian bishops present to have been incorporated into the historic episcopate, for the sake of full communion.

¶ 28 describes the pattern for future sharing in episcopal ministries. Moravian bishops will be present at episcopal consecrations in those states with the greatest concentration of Moravian congregations. At all Moravian consecrations, there will be at least one Episcopal bishop present, as a sign of the relationship of full communion.

b) *Ministry of Presbyters: actions of the Episcopal Church*

¶ 29 describes the process for reconciliation of the ministry of presbyters.

**Excursus: pattern followed with the ELCA.** In *Called to Common Mission*, the Episcopal Church recognized the ministries of pastors in the ELCA. To allow for ELCA pastors to serve in the Episcopal Church, Article VIII of the Constitution was amended and the Preface to the Ordinal was “suspended” – that is, the General Convention stated that it did not apply – to all ELCA pastors in good standing as of January 1, 2001. All subsequent ELCA pastors are required to be ordained by a bishop. The actions required the agreement by two consecutive General Conventions.

Article VIII requires anyone ministering in the Episcopal Church to subscribe to “conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church.” Article VIII was amended in 2000 to read: “A bishop may permit a minister ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its predecessor bodies who has made the promise of conformity required by that Church in place of the foregoing declaration to officiate on a temporary basis as an ordained minister of this church.”

The Preface to the Ordinal (BCP, 510) states that “No persons are allowed to exercise the offices of bishop, priest, or deacon in this church unless they are so ordained or have already received such ordination with the laying-on of hands by bishops who are themselves duly qualified to confer Holy Orders.”

The need to amend Article VIII should not be necessary. Given that Article VIII only allows for an exception to be made for Lutheran clergy, the 2006 General Convention approved on first reading a more generic version of this paragraph. It reads:

A bishop may permit an ordained minister in good standing in a Church with which this Church is in full communion as specified by the Canons who has made the foregoing declaration, or a minister ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its predecessor bodies who has made the promise of conformity required by that Church in place of the foregoing declaration to officiate on a temporary basis as an ordained minister of this Church.

If adopted on a second reading by the 2009 General Convention, this will prevent the need to amend the Constitution every time the Episcopal Church enters into a relationship of full communion.

The current document does not propose a suspension of the Preface to the Ordinal. Given that the ceremony described in ¶ 27 incorporates Moravian bishops into the historic episcopate, there is no need to suspend the Preface to the Ordinal. Rather, incorporating Moravian bishops into the historic episcopate fulfills the intentions of the Preface to the Ordinal: they are considered bishops qualified to confer holy orders by virtue of their incorporation into the historic episcopate. This is a way to “grandfather” in Moravian presbyters without having to suspend the Preface.

*c) Ministry of Presbyters: Actions of the Moravian Church*

The Northern and Southern Provinces pledge to begin the process to amend their Books of Order to allow for an Episcopal priest seeking to transfer permanently into the Moravian Church to be received as a Moravian presbyter. Currently all clergy who transfer into the Moravian Church are received as deacons.

*d) Ministry of Deacons*

The document states that the two churches have differences in how it understands the diaconate, but that these differences need not be church dividing. Given the differences in understanding of the diaconate, however, the document states that there will not be interchangeability of deacons.

**VI. Interchangeability of Clergy**

This section outlines the process for exchange of clergy, and is drawn from the language used in *Called to Common Mission*. The polity and standards of each church are to be followed and respected.

**VII. Joint Commission**

A joint commission to oversee and assist in implementing the full communion proposal will be established. Given our common full communion relationship with the ELCA, there has been some discussion about whether it would be appropriate to have a tripartite joint commission.

**VIII. Wider Context**

Both churches are in dialogue with churches of the Reformed tradition (Presbyterian, UCC), and this proposal will be communicated to those conversations. Likewise, as noted above, the proposal will also be submitted to the appropriate international bodies of our churches as part of broader process of consultation.



In addition, both of our churches overlap with different provinces of the other. For instance, the Moravian congregations in Canada are part of the United States Northern Province. Similarly, Alaska and the Virgin Islands are dioceses of the Episcopal Church but are separate provinces of the Moravian Church. This proposal will be circulated to those areas where our churches overlap with the hope that those provinces will sign on to this agreement. A similar dynamic has informed the ELCA-Moravian full communion relationship.

## **IX. Existing Relationships**

This proposal would mark the first time three churches (ELCA, Episcopal Church, Moravian Church) have entered into full communion on the basis of separately negotiated concordats. We welcome this development and have been exploring ways in which we might live into this common relationship.

With regards to other existing relationships, it is important to note that this proposal is between the Episcopal Church and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church. It does not initiate or inaugurate full communion or clergy interchangeability between other provinces of Anglican Communion and the Moravian Church, although this agreement will be circulated in the hopes that others would also sign on to it.

## **X. Other Dialogues**

Both churches will continue with ecumenical conversations and partnerships, while being in consultation with one another.

## **XI. Conclusion**

The Moravian Church has a long and storied musical tradition, expressing the distinctive liturgical and theological elements of the Moravian ethos. Fittingly, this full communion proposal closes with a hymn from the *Moravian Book of Worship*. The hymn acknowledges that our unity is in Christ Jesus that this full communion proposal seeks to bring into reality:

O Yes, having found in the Lord our delight  
He is our chief object by day or by night  
This knits us together, no longer we roam  
We all have one father, and heav'n is our home.