



CommUnity News

June 2017

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Dear Unity Family,

I have completed the Moravian Leadership Network program which began last September and finished the weekend after Easter. Thanks to Ruth Burcaw and the many Moravian leaders from Moravian Theological Seminary to pastors and teachers in the Southern Province, who guided us through Moravian history, theology, and congregational practice. It is clear to me that the Holy Spirit brought the people together in Herrnhut, Germany to mold them and use them to spread the Good News: that God came to us in Christ, and is with us today in "Spirit."

In these gatherings as well as the Synod preparation gathering at New Philadelphia Moravian Church last February, we heard from our younger generation of Moravians. Some of the things they said have stuck with me, and these are my words of interpretation I would like to share with you:

Church, we talk and talk and talk, but we do so using a dead language. We're holding on to dusty words that have no resonance in people's ears, not realizing that just saying those words over and over isn't the answer. Are we too lazy to find new words and expressions that speak in a language that more people can understand? Are our words becoming empty, because we do not always live them in earnest – like forgiving, accepting, showing kindness, trying to understand others?

Church, are we spending most of our time, money and energy on our building and property in hopes people will come? Are we content to franchise out our particular brand of Jesus-stuff, then sit back and wait for the sinful world to beat down our door?

On June 4th, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The story Luke tells in Acts is so bizarre, we find it hard to relate it to our own experience.

But, in John's Gospel, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit looks like an *Advocate* --the one who stands up for you when you need it; the one who speaks on your behalf; the one who lends you a helping hand, takes your side, and won't leave you while you're down.

What if John is telling us that the Holy Spirit looks a lot like you and me when we stand up for others, try to be accepting and forgiving as Jesus, and carry Christ's love into the world.

Wouldn't this be like we were able to take one of those huge, indescribable, rather esoteric theological concepts and bring it down to earth, make it understandable, even seriously imaginable. And maybe, just maybe, each Sunday, we will have an experience of the "Holy." Then, actually think about how the Holy Spirit is at work in us and through us, for each other and for people in our world. Isn't this what we've been hearing from our younger people? Could this be their way of expecting and experiencing "Pentecost" - the work of the Holy Spirit?

I am thankful to have been invited to be part of the Moravian tradition. I have learned much about this side of the Christian family and I have learned much about myself. And, thank you for your faithful ministry, because whether you know it or not, the Holy Spirit is not only working through you but also looks a lot like you, right now, as you continue bearing witness to Jesus.

Faithfully yours,

Barry