

A REPORT TO OUR CONGREGATION FROM THE JOINT BOARD ON THE ISSUE OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH AND THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH ENTERING INTO FULL COMMUNION

At our church's 2008 annual Church Council meeting, our Joint Board received a directive from our congregation to provide a report from our board about the proposal for Full Communion between the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church. The motion made and passed at the Church Council meeting was the following:

The Joint Board will prepare a report that expresses our views of the issue of entering full communion with the Episcopal Church and to make this report available in the church newsletter. We will read this at our next Church Council and invite questions and answers.

The following is the report from our Joint Board:

As our Joint Board has studied, discussed, reflected and shared about the issue of the proposed Full Communion between the Moravian Church and Episcopal Church, there are several opinions among our board members about it.

Several of our board members are against it. The reasons for being against it are the following:

- Why would we enter into this agreement with a denomination whose teachings and actions have caused many in their membership to leave the Episcopal Church? The Episcopal Church does not have its house in order.
- The leadership of the Episcopal Church has accepted, condoned and celebrated the consecration of a homosexual bishop, and homosexuality goes against the teaching of the Bible.
- Other issues which go against Scripture have been expressed from leaders of the Episcopal Church such as Jesus not being the only way to God and discounting the virgin birth.

There are some of our members who are for this agreement. The reasons for being for it are the following:

- If the Episcopal Church is a Christian Church, Jesus would want us to share unity with them. Full Communion does not mean we fully agree with another denomination. It means that we share unity in Christ with them. If an Episcopalian came to our church, we would welcome that person as a brother or sister in Christ.
- We share unity in the essential beliefs of the Moravian Church with the essential beliefs of the Episcopal Church in its written doctrine and not the thoughts or actions of its leaders.

There are others on our board who see this agreement as unnecessary or as a non-essential issue. The reasons for these responses are the following:

- It does not change anything about our church and therefore there is no need for it. It has little practical consequences.
- This issue is a non-essential and people are entitled to have their own opinions about it.
- Why have this agreement with any denomination and instead proclaim our spiritual unity with all Christian denominations.

Because of our different views about this issue, our board is put in a position in which we do not share the same opinions. With this issue we want to act in a Christian way and in a Moravian way. We agree to disagree and to not let our different opinions effect the Christian love and respect we have for each other or affect our service together for God's kingdom. As one of our members stated, "I firmly believe this question should be decided by each individual and we should have enough love to respect each other's decision." We will continue to pray for this issue and pray that God's will is done.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact any of the members of our Joint Board.