

## MORAVIAN MOMENT #36...

### The role of the Bishop in the organizational structure of the Moravian Church

The position of Bishop is the highest degree in the orders of the Moravian Ministry. This historic possession is valued, treasured and faithfully guarded from the day of its acquirement in 1467. The Bishop is a bond uniting the Moravian church with the Church of the Apostolic days and connecting the Moravian Bohemian Brethren with the Moravian Church today. The Bishop therefore plays a pivotal role and has a very significant place in the Moravian Church.

**The office of Bishop in the Moravian Church is not an administrative; rather, it is a Spiritual one. He or she is Pastor Pastorum or Pastor of Pastors. It means that everything that applies to the Pastor, applies to the Bishop as well. The Bishop it is who has the responsibility to minister to the Pastors. He or she is expected to sanitize and bandaged the wounds of Pastors in such a way as to keep them whole. The Bishop is in the role of not only restoring souls, but he or she has a preventative maintenance role. The Bishop must have discerning eyes and a heart of compassion to minister to the Pastors in his or her jurisdiction.** He or she ought to be proactive rather than reactive. In addition, the Bishop must be one of experience who enjoys the confidence of not only the Church at large, but of the Ministerial Staff.

In addition to the special role the Bishop has towards Pastors, he or she also has a Pastoral role to the Church at large. He or she guides the Church to a life of faithfulness to Christ and the Gospel. He or she has a special duty of interceding for the unity of the Church and the deepening of its spiritual life.

While the Bishop of the Moravian Church has no administrative power by virtue of the office, he or she may be empowered by the Provincial Synod or the PEC for specific tasks or clearly defined roles. The Bishop serves more in a consultative capacity to the PEC and so it is critical that all matters concerning the work in the Province which falls within his or her sphere as a spiritual leader be delegated to him or her. A Moravian Bishop is a Bishop of the Unity and a Bishop in a particular Province, rather than Bishop of that Province. The opinion of a Bishop shall customarily be sought and given due consideration and weight in matters of doctrine and practice.

Only Bishops have the right to Ordain or to Consecrate persons to the orders of the Ministry, but only when commissioned to do so by the Provincial Synod or PEC. The Bishop, however, has the right to decline a commission to Ordain or Consecrate someone, should he or she wish to do so.

Finally, how do we get a Bishop? The Bishop is not appointed by anyone, but is elected from among the Presbyters, the second degree of orders in the ministry. This is done either at a Provincial Synod, or in a Provincial election ordered by the Synod under regulations contained in its constitution.

*16<sup>th</sup> September, 2007*