

MORAVIAN MOMENT #54

The Meaning of Ordination -Part 1

Ordination is one of the most important rites of the Christian Church. The Moravian Church acknowledges and cherishes its importance, and therefore does not take it lightly. The Moravian Bishop is integrally involved in the preparation for the candidate for Ordination. The Provincial Elders Conference (PEC) initiates the process and having satisfied itself of the candidate suitability presents such an individual to the Bishop to be Ordained. The Bishop would then do his or her preparation with the candidate. It is the Bishop alone who decides whether the Ordination will take place or not. If in the Bishop's estimation the individual is not ready, with regard to his or her Spiritual maturity, Commitment to God and the Church, Emotional stability, his or her Lifestyle, Attitude and Behaviour, among other things, the Bishop can refuse to Ordain the individual. The Ordination of an individual once he or she has completed a prescribed Course of study is not automatic. There is a period of Probation and Evaluation.

What then is Ordination? What has been its meaning and significance for the Church down through the ages? And what is its meaning and significance for us in these days of ferment, revolution and change?

Ordination is a public recognition of the fact that God has chosen a Brother or Sister with special gifts for the Edification of His Church which is the people of God. This CALL is validated and AUTENTICATED through the corporate will of the Church and is made manifest by the LAYING ON OF HANDS by the Church's representative, in this case, the Bishop. It is the Bishop alone who has the right to Ordain in the Moravian Church. By the Laying on of hands we do not mechanically transmit any peculiar or particular grace but, in the first place, it is a symbol of the continuous ministry of the Church. By this very act we are adding another brother or sister to the unbroken line of holy men and women whom God has called and Ordained to perform some special function within the community of HIS people. In the second place, it is a symbol that God has first laid HIS hand upon the individual who is now being set aside for the full-time ministry of the Church.

John Calvin while involved in his work of Reformation in Geneva met with much opposition and in a moment of weakness decided to run away. But he had not gone very far when, in his own words, he declared: *I felt as if the mighty hand of God was laid upon me.* We Ordain because we believe that God has put HIS hands on the individual and it signals the Church's approval of that ministry.

27 January, 2008