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To: UNITAS <unitas@stsams.org>
Sent: Mon, 20 Oct 2008 9:20 am
Subject: [Unitas] From the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem (Pennsylvania)

Episcopalians and Moravians

Delegates unanimously approved a resolution that "the Diocese of Bethlehem commends to the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church the adoption of Finding our Delight in the Lord, the Full Communion proposal with the Moravian Church of America , Northern and Southern Provinces."

The resolution was submitted by The Rev. Maria Tjeltveit, Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the Diocese of Bethlehem, and member of the national Moravian-Episcopal Dialogue. The following background was provided.

Bethlehem is the cradle of the Moravian Church in America. Members of the Diocese of Bethlehem have been involved in the Moravian-Episcopal Dialogue since its inception in 1999. The Rev. Canon Jane Teter was the first member from our diocese, succeeded by The Rev. Nicholas Knisely, and then The Rev. Maria Tjeltveit. Nick Knisely (now Dean of the Cathedral in Phoenix, Arizona) continues on the Dialogue, as a communications consultant. The Rev. Geoffrey Howson, former Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the diocese, has participated in an informal way. Because of this, the Full Communion proposal, Finding Our Delight in the Lord, is very much the work of our diocese on behalf of the whole Episcopal Church.

Full Communion is a way to live out Jesus Christ's prayer "that they may all be one." Both the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church are non-doctrinal churches committed to ecumenism. Entering into Full Communion with the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in America will further our ecumenical efforts, encouraging congregations to work together in mission and ministry. We have gifts to offer each other and share through this relationship.

Both the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church in America, Northern and Southern Provinces, are in Full Communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Full Communion with the Moravian Church will, in a sense, close the triangle, strengthening the witness and mission of our three Churches.

Many Episcopalians live in areas where there are few, if any, Moravians, so the Full Communion proposal may not seem relevant to some deputies to General Convention. This resolution encourages all the bishops and deputies, whether from areas like ours where there is a significant Moravian presence or from those areas where there is none, to embrace this historic opportunity to deepen our Christian unity by adopting the Full Communion proposal. Doing so will enrich our churches and enhance our ministry and witness to the world.

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