

Report to the Synod of 2018

Mission, Purpose and Values

The Board of Cooperative Ministries (BCM) engages and supports Southern Province congregations and Regional Conferences of Churches (RCCs) in their ministries as together we grow in faith, love and hope, following Jesus in serving the world. We **B**uild, **C**onnect, & **M**obilize Moravians to live out their faith!



Responsibilities

Consider [BCM](#) the “tool shed” in the garden that is the Moravian Church Southern Province. We offer resources and tools to help Moravians [live the Essentials](#) of spiritual growth, community, and mission. We serve families, small groups, congregations, agencies, and RCCs, as well as pastors, lay leaders, church educators, and staff. ([View images](#) from the past four years!) Synod 2014 (thru PEC) charged BCM to develop Christ-centered, innovative, flexible, and adaptive solutions in several areas of focus, including:

- **Gifts, Strengths, Resources:** Identifying, developing, sharing and providing resources, materials, and activities that help laity discover, develop and use their gifts, strengths and abilities at the service of Christ in their congregation and community;
- **Worship:** Support and encourage congregations to continue to embrace Christ-centered and people-focused worship using a variety of expressions of worship;
- **Moravian Identity:** Continue educational efforts about the unique spiritual heritage of the Moravian Church, how it continues to shape us, and motivates us for mission in the world. This would include continuing to identify and/or develop resources, materials, events and programs for congregations to educate their members about our heritage and history.
- **Technology:** Develop and carry out specific action plans to support congregations and RCCs, emphasizing external, missional communication about the Gospel and our Moravian values, heritage and mission and ways technology can be used as a resource or tool in service to the mission of the church (rather than something that isolates, intrudes, is a barrier, etc.).
- **New Programs or Initiatives:** Determine how best to engage and support congregations in identifying and developing new initiatives in areas below. The primary focus should be on the "incubation" of new and creative activity in the congregations and RCCs rather than provincial programs or initiatives.

Synod also wanted provincial entities to help "take the eternal, unchanging love of Christ into the world in creative and accessible ways."

Summary of Activities

Following Synod 2014, BCM reorganized into subcommittees to address specific Synod directives. The subcommittees were: Advocacy & Mission Roundtable, Technology, Moravian Identity & Worship, Congregational Support, and RCC Support. While progress was made, this mostly staff-driven, top-down organizational model was not getting the results we needed.

In order to respond appropriately to Synod directives and emerging issues, we re-organized yet again. At our 2016 planning retreat, the board used a group process called Open Space Technology to create a more self-managed organization. We developed flexible working groups that enabled our members and other Moravians to work in areas for which they had a passion or interest, with staff providing support as needed. The current [working groups](#) of the BCM include: Adaptive Leadership Group, Aging Well Team, Children, Family & Youth Task Force, College Ministry Team, Environmental Stewardship Task Force, Friends of the Resource Center, Mental Health Roundtable, Regional Youth Council Leadership Team, RCC Ad-hoc Group, and Young Adult Moravians. Other groups form and/or are disbanded as specific needs arise or as interests and needs ebb and flow. Much is happening that is hopeful and positive, particularly in these areas:

- **Moravian Identity:** BCM continues to provide unique, relevant resources for Moravians. The first edition of *Simply Moravian: A Modern Guide to the Ancient Essentials* has been updated into a second edition and translated into Spanish (recently became “required” reading for Cuban Moravians). BCM, along with the Northern Province, developed and distributed a curriculum designed to serve Moravians from preschoolers to adults. Our [Resource Center](#) expanded its library of Moravian books and created an expanded bibliography to enable more access to the rich and ever-expanding body of Moravian resources. Social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram focus on the uniquely Moravian aspects of our denomination. Over 150 people contributed to the [#MoravianStar2015](#) and [#MoravianStar2016](#) campaigns, and fundraised for Sunnyside Ministry by selling notecards featuring submitted images. Other projects underway include a video series about the Moravian view of biblical interpretation, a spiritual mentoring program for college-aged Moravians focusing on the Essentials, and [Comenius Learning Series](#) programs sharing new academic discoveries of ways our heritage informs our future. Hundreds gathered for a [worship and communion service](#) at Home Moravian Church in July 2015 to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the martyrdom of John Hus, per Resolution 15 from the 2014 Synod.
- **Collaboration:** BCM recognizes that “the future of mission is collaboration.” We have taken steps during the past few years to begin partnerships that will allow for creative, mission-focused ministry that maximizes the gifts and expertise of various individuals and organizations. The Moravian curriculum project, [college ministry](#) efforts, the Children’s Festival, the Aging Well Team’s ACAP project, Synod planning work, the Daily Text mobile app, and other social media and technology initiatives are examples of such collaborations.
- **Leadership Development:** Much effort has gone into training leaders to lead into a new reality. Fifty Moravians have now completed [Moravian Leadership Network](#) training, which joins and strengthens current and emerging leaders in the Moravian Church, Southern Province through experiential, group-oriented learning. The goal is to broaden and deepen the pool of Moravians who will lead with vision, purpose, excitement and common good, creating a future of greater possibilities. Participants discovered new ways God is calling them to serve and affirmed their gifts and talents, enabling them to serve others and advance the cause of Christ. Many “graduates” of the MLN experience are now providing leadership in a variety of areas, including congregations and the province.
- **Human Resources:** Declining congregational income forced BCM to eliminate a key full-time staff position for 2017 – Director of Youth, College, and Young Adult Ministries. We greatly miss the considerable talent and commitment of the Rev. Doug Rights, who provided leadership and encouragement to our province’s young people for four years. This change required us to create new ways of carrying out these ministries, which we have done by using a combination of full-time and part-time employees and volunteers. We now have a part-time College Ministry Coordinator and a part-time Regional Youth Council Coordinator, both of whom have adapted current programming and created new initiatives to strengthen our ministries to youth and young adults even as our resources diminish. The Association of Presbyterian Educators (APCE) recognized two of BCM’s staff. Beth Hayes, our Director of Congregational Resources and Ministries, was named 2016 Educator of the Year for her outstanding contributions in faith formation to both Moravians and Presbyterians for over 30 years. Ruth Cole Burcaw, BCM’s Executive Director, received the 2017 Empower Award, presented by APCE for her work to develop and empower Moravians to live out their faith.
- **Technology & Communication:** Technology and communications continue to evolve and BCM continues finding [new ways of sharing the Moravian story](#) with people across many media. Over 2000 people follow BCM on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). Engagement, which involves liking, commenting, sharing, or re-tweeting our content, is up significantly. We now reach more than an average of 1,000 people with each Facebook post. All our active social media accounts saw more than a 50% increase in followers over the past two years. Our [BCM Spotlight Blog](#) provides a forum for Moravians to discuss a variety of issues and topics of importance for the church today. Since the blog’s inception in 2012, we’ve published 121 posts, receiving 21,577 views and 15,782 visitors. We’ve been able to livestream or record many of [our special events](#), and have extended our audience reach by making those recordings available on YouTube after the event. Zoom video conferencing software has expanded our capability to involve more Moravians from Charlotte, Raleigh, Georgia, and Florida in our meetings and activities. Our Communications Project Manager, Andrew Cox, works with churches, agencies, and others to help them make the most of their social media and online presence.
- **Continued Planning & Adaptation:** The challenges we face are complex and require us to find new ways of doing and being church. Just as we’ve evolved our ways of working since 2014, we anticipate the need to do it

again as we continue to support mission and ministry in an ever-changing world. BCM's 2017 retreat focused on planning for an uncertain future and explored various ways to organize even more effectively as the 2018 Synod approaches. Our staff also assists with process design and supports the province in its focus on [living the essentials in the future](#).

While not a complete list of all events or programming efforts, the following describes some of the initiatives we've created or continued to work on since 2014:

- Adaptive Leadership Support Group
- Admin support (Friends of Moravian Prison Ministry)
- Aging Well Team (fall rally, spring conference, resources)
- Anthony's Plot (an affiliated ministry)
- Children, Family, & Youth Task Force
- Children's Festival (planning/promotions)
- Christmas Eve service blog/advertising
- City with Dwellings (homeless ministry)
- College Age Convo (trip to Germany & Prague)
- College Age Ministry website & activities
- Come & Worship (an affiliated ministry)
- Comenius Learning Series
- Congregational CE Development/Training
- Congregational Coaching & Ministry Planning
- Curricula Sales, Support, Events
- *Daily Text* sales/distribution
- Ecumenical educator support group
- Environmental Stewardship Task Force
- Financial Freedom Courses for young adults
- Fresh Expressions training (emerging ministry)
- Friends of the Resource Center
- *From Hus to Us* Moravian VBS
- Gemeinschaft program development
- Gifts Discovery Workshops (asset mapping)
- High School Convos (Greensboro/DC)
- Immigration Justice Task Force
- Interprovincial Moravian curriculum development
- John Hus 600th Anniversary Service
- Leadership Focus (provincial training)
- *Living Branches* (Moravian Curriculum)
- Living the Essentials (discipleship framework)
- Living Faith small group ministry curriculum
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- Mental Health Roundtable
- MissionInsite Training
- Moravian Leadership Network (MLN)
- MLN Alumni activities
- Moravianbcm.org
- Multicultural ministry conferences/initiatives
- New Resource Development (*Simply Moravian* II/III, Biblical Interpretation videos, board leadership resources)
- Ongoing coaching, consulting, training with individuals, congregations, RCCs
- *Opening Doors to Discipleship* – online faith formation/teacher training
- Prayer Day for Christian Education
- Prayer Day for Older Adults
- Presbyterian Association of Resource Centers website content/development
- RCC Support
- Regional Youth Council
- Resource Center/Online Library
- *Simply Moravian* 2nd Edition
- *Simply Moravian* Spanish Translation
- Social Media presence (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest)
- Spiritual Type Workshops
- Sunnyside Ministry (program support)
- Technology support & website development
- *The Essentials* - Quarterly Printed Newsletter
- *The Essentials* Weekly E-News
- The Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston-Salem (Congregational Health)
- The BCM Blog
- VBS Open House
- Youth Leader Support
- Young Adult Moravians

And more. . .

BCM also has its share of growing edges, among them:

- **Board Engagement:** While BCM's new, more self-organizing way of working is a positive shift, the traditional board structure has not changed. Attendance at BCM meetings has declined continually over the past few years, despite a steady stream of events, challenges, meetings, and opportunities for ministry.

- **Regional Conferences of Churches:** Several RCCs function with various mission and fellowship opportunities for their congregations. Several others are not functioning or are functioning only minimally. Early on, the RCC Support team examined the efficacy of the original model and provided RCCs with [pertinent resources and information](#). A recent survey indicates continued decline in RCC attendance and activity overall. A new ad hoc group is exploring a proposal to recommend the composition of the RCCs be based on more missional and topical interests. There will be more to come on this!
- **Emerging Ministries:** Our partnerships with our affiliated ministries, [Anthony's Plot](#) and [Come & Worship](#), continue to evolve. BCM board and staff have expended significant mental energy, conversation, training, and resources into emerging ministry development during the past few years, though we remain primarily observers of these efforts to date. We are ever hopeful that the next four years will provide us with the direction and opportunity to more actively contribute to this important work.
- **Declining Resources, Increasing Demands:** Figuring out how to continue to provide a high level of relevant, helpful support to congregations and individuals will be a constant dilemma in the foreseeable future. In order to manage it, we are going to have to understand clearly the most immediate needs of churches as well as the priorities coming from Synod through the PEC.

Future Direction and Opportunities

Here we are. We are not who we once were . . . and not yet who we will become. And as we move toward an unknown but exciting new future, we have had to make difficult and painful decisions. And we'll have to let go of even more as our world and our church continue to change. BCM's past four years have been marked by change and loss as we continuously re-organized and [said goodbye](#) to a beloved staff member. But these years have also been full of faithful service, creativity, and hope as we work to make a difference in the lives of many Moravians. And we do have much about which to be hopeful.

Our rich history provides example after example of Moravians acting with boldness and courage in the face of much adversity. We can still respond boldly in uncertain times to ensure that God's grace is known far and wide through our witness and action. BCM will do its part to explore our church's next chapter. We trust that God is calling us to a new thing, one that will challenge and maybe even frighten us, but also lead us to a new, Spirit-filled reality of faith, love, and hope. We know there are no easy answers. Hard things are hard.

To continue this mission entrusted to us, we must love each other. Only we can love each other. Only we can figure out new and different ways of being the church together. We need each other now more than ever. And we do have all that we need to carry on Christ's work in the world today. Ephesians 3:20-21 (from *The Message*) lays it out for us. "God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us."

May God's Spirit move deeply within each of us as we continue our work as the church Jesus loves, moving ever closer to the people Jesus loves.

