

First Partial Report
of the Committee on Spiritual Formation

RE: Spiritual Companionship

WHEREAS, the 18th Century Moravian Church utilized a Choir System to meet the spiritual needs of individuals in small group settings, and

WHEREAS, the Moravian Church Northern Province has continued to seek relevant ways to serve the needs of its members through spiritual growth experiences, and

WHEREAS, the Moravian Church Northern Province over the last decade has taken steps beyond traditional Christian education to encourage an introspective life through:

- Articles in The Moravian Magazine
- Financial support for clergy and seminary students to obtain personal spiritual direction
- The work of the Spiritual Formation Task Force during the intersynodal period, between the 2014 and 2018 Synods of the Moravian Church Northern Province, the Christian Education Spiritual Life Ministry of the Moravian Church Eastern District, and other individuals, pastors, and spiritual directors, all of whom provided the support and training of others for the formation of Spiritual Companionship Groups in multiple Moravian congregations
- The work of Marcella Kraybill-Greggo, who was appointed by the Provincial Elders' Conference of the Moravian Church Northern Province as directed by the 2018 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province to continue establishing Spiritual Companionship Groups within Moravian congregations, therefore be it

RESOLVED: (1) The 2023 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province thanks the Spiritual Formation Task Force appointed at the 2014 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province, the Christian Education Spiritual Life Ministry of the Moravian Church Eastern District, the Provincial Elders' Conference of the Moravian Church Northern Province, Marcella Kraybill-Greggo, and many other individuals passionate about spiritual formation for their faithful work to create, train, and sustain Spiritual Companionship Groups in Moravian congregations, and

WHEREAS, Spiritual Companionship Groups have provided meaningful experiences for laity and clergy in Moravian congregations, and

WHEREAS, continued introduction of Spiritual Companionship Groups is needed to help laity and clergy understand and implement this practice in their ministry and

RESOLVED: (2) The 2023 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province encourages the Provincial Elders' Conference (PEC) of the Moravian Church Northern Province to continue supporting Spiritual Companionship Groups as directed by the 2018 Northern Provincial synod. The PEC shall provide the needed financial resources of \$15,000 for the formation of new Spiritual Companionship Groups and the continuation of existing Spiritual Companionship Groups within Moravian congregations for the intersynodal period.

Steve Gohdes, Chairperson
Malinda Lindstrom, Secretary
June 23, 2023

Submitted in concurrence with the Finance Committee

The Second Partial and Final Report
of the Committee on Spiritual Formation

(RE): Returning the Holy Spirit as Mother as a Church Festival and Celebration.

Whereas: The Holy Spirit as Mother was an important church festival practiced by the Moravian Church in the 18th Century. Dr. Craig Atwood said, “The Mutterfest, (the celebration of the Holy Spirit as the Mother of the Church) dates to December 19, 1756. It was celebrated in the congregations in Europe and in Bethlehem that year. The last recorded celebration of the Mutterfest was 1774.”¹ and

Whereas: The Holy Spirit as mother is a unique and treasured part of our history. This celebration along with many other Moravian traditions fell out of practice due to an attempt to align with mainline Protestant denominational practices of the time and

Whereas: The Holy Spirit as Mother is a concept that remains Biblically grounded in Scripture. “And I will [a] pray the Father, and he shall give you another [b] Comforter, that he may be with you forever.” [John 14:16 ASV] “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” [Isaiah 66:13 NIV] and

Whereas: Zinzendorf’s presentation of the Holy Spirit as Mother² was not about giving Gender to God, but keeping our theology in simple and easily relatable terms. This festival would not replace the Moravian view of the Holy Trinity, but it would be another valuable lens to enhance our understanding and

Whereas: Expanding our view of God beyond just masculine terminology allows all children of God to see themselves in the divine and

Whereas: The Church & Society Committee’s report on Violence against women that was approved at the 2018 synod said: “Whereas the predominantly male language used for God can be challenging, limiting, and painful for women who have been victims of violence. Therefore be it resolved: clergy and congregations are encouraged to invite individuals to expand the images they use for God beyond those that are solely male.” Therefore be it

RESOLVED: (3) The 2023 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province invites congregations of the Moravian Church Northern Province to designate one Sunday a year where they find a special way to honor the traditional Moravian celebration of the Holy Spirit as Mother. This could be done with a lovefeast, a liturgy, a Sunday school teaching, or many other ways. Therefore be it

RESOLVED: (4) The 2023 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province enthusiastically encourages expansive language about God in worship and educational context. Genesis 1:27 says, “God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them (Common English Bible)” And therefore be it further

RESOLVED: (5) The 2023 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province encourages the Provincial Elders Conference of the Moravian Church Northern Province and Moravian Theological Seminary to provide resources and educational opportunities surrounding female empowerment in the Moravian Church.

1 Craig Atwood. “Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem.” Penn State University Press. 2012.

2 <http://zinzendorf.com/pages/index.php%3Fid=holy-spirit-as-mother>

Committee Chair: Steve Gohdes
Secretary: Malinda Lindstrom
June 23, 2023