

**Commission on Congregational Development
Report to 2022 Synod
(Formerly the Board of Cooperative Ministries)**



The past four years the Board of Cooperative Ministries has been experiencing similar challenges to our congregations. Seeking to pursue our mission and purpose with declining resources, changing cultural norms and expectations. This coupled with the Covid-19 Pandemic has resulted in various pivots throughout the last four years to meet the needs of our congregations with the resources we have available to us. While the work of the BCM covered many things there are three main areas of focus. Learning opportunities, Congregational Support and Provincial Work.

Learning opportunities

Leadership Focus: This one day series of workshops expanded in 2019 to include a second series in Stone Mountain, GA in May after the February series that was held in Winston-Salem, NC. The 2020 Leadership Focus was one of the last things we were able to do before the pandemic changed things. In 2021 it expanded again as we partnered with the Healthier Congregations Taskforce of the Northern Province to welcome a second keynote speaker and various workshops lead by Northern Province Moravians. The 2022 Leadership focus was smaller in order to leave space for the preparation for the work of synod and to allow for further introduction to the Commission on Congregational Development.

Comenius Series: Our lecture series continued to invite reflection and conversation on issues that our church and world face.

- 2018: *Called in Faith to do What? The Bible & Ethics*
The Rev. Dr. Frank Crouch & Dr. Audrey West
- 2019: *Moravian Faith Communities Past and Future*
The Rev. Dr. Craig Atwood & the Rev. Andrew Heil
- 2020: *A Wounded Faith: Zinzendorf's Theology in the 21st Century*
The Rev. Chaz Snider, Virtual
- 2021: *Madness: American Protestant Responses to Mental Illness*
The Rev. Dr. Heather Vacek, Virtual

Online Workshops and Events: We hosted many workshops, especially in the first year of the pandemic, focused on technology, resources for changing formats for worship, ways to pivot quickly in response to pandemic restrictions, and continuing education for lay and clergy leaders in congregations. The ability for us to respond quickly with tech support and Zoom functionality was helpful to many congregations navigating the pandemic and the move to online worship. The BCM office hours provided the opportunity for leaders to connect with us and to ask for what resources they most needed in their ministry.

BCM Connect Groups: Over 125 Moravians and their friends from all over North America participated in our online small group experiences, beginning in July of 2020. We hope to build on this in the future with more opportunities for connections among leaders in the church.

Congregational Support

Congregational Consulting: As well as offering our events, the BCM worked in one-on-one consultation with many congregations in our province. Offering leadership training, Mission Insight reporting, faith formation consulting, and other specific trainings upon request from congregations. This work overlapped with the technology support and resourcing during the pandemic shift. This is an area that will grow under the new commission structure and build off of the quadrennial review process, as well as, congregational requests for support.

Curriculum Sales Re-Design: In 2020 about 20 customers purchased from BCM's scaled-back curricula options and many others learned about converting to a more virtual or hybrid environment. During 2021 our team discerned that our focus on faith formation is best served by ending the sale of curriculum from our office effective after the Spring 2022 standing orders were filled. This shift will allow us to focus on reviewing curriculum for theological alignment with the Moravian church, accessibility for both virtual and in person formation, and follows the greater trends in faith formation as a whole. Churches will still have access to publisher information and can order directly from publishers once they have determined the best resource for them. Consultation with our office is always available.

Collaborative Faith Formation: New growth in our ministry took the form of a collaborative opportunities for faith formation for our children. An online collaborative Sunday School has been supporting the work of 8 congregations and continues. We have helped to offer two collaborative confirmation retreats with participants from ten congregations. Five congregations implemented and planned a hybrid Vacation Bible School programs for the past two years that are available for use in other congregations as a new model of faith formation. We believe this is a sign of the future and are excited for the possibilities this brings to our congregations and province.

The Moravian Experience: This online collection of resources and materials is designed to help Moravians continue their spiritual formation online. Found at www.themoravianexperience.org. With help from Michael Terry and Tim Byerly, we revived and adapted portions of the Gemeinschaft curriculum and the Living Faith small group experience for online use. The resources can be used both by individuals on their own journey or in community as a small group experience.

Other Ministry Initiatives & Work (not an exhaustive list)

- **#BeMoravianStars Campaign:** In an effort to spread a little light during some very dark times, BCM sought nominations to honor Moravians making a difference in their community. Twenty individuals or organizations were recognized in 2020. We “starred” their yards in honor of their love for their neighbors, and featured their good deeds on our social media channels and website.
- Created *A Plan for Regathering: A Guide for Church Boards* to support congregations in their efforts to regather in-person responsibly.
- **Spotlight Blog:** Fifteen different contributors offered 50+ articles that challenged and inspired us.
- Bill Needs’ *Coffee with Moravian Ancestors* interview” series – 14 articles with illustrations.
- **God’s Perfect Color coloring book** based on a poem by Dana Myers and with illustrations by Andrew David Cox. This coloring book debuted at the 2021 Children’s Festival!
- **Writing Your Own Spiritual Autobiography** Series: We appreciate Kay Windsor offering her writing expertise in this 4-part series, available on The Moravian Experience.

Provincial Work

Partnerships: Building on the decisions from Synod 2018 to pursue more collaboration among provincial and interprovincial agencies the BCM partnered with IBOC, MMFA, Healthier Congregations Taskforce (NP), Archives (SP), Moravian Church Without Walls, The Justice Connection (Peg Chamberlin non-profit), Create in Me Podcast (NP), Northern Province Racial Justice Team, Moravian Ministries Association.

These partnerships were especially fruitful 2020 producing things like:MoravianChristmas.org, Online Sunday Morning Worship Services, Interprovincial worship opportunities and resources, Workshops for Leadership Focus.

Email Communications: In addition to our weekly sending of The BCM Essentials, we created and sent a variety of emails for announcements and events. In response to Synod in 2018 we produced a Weekly *Loving Hearts* United Email and are continuing to explore how that resource can be used more broadly.

Working groups: We have a variety of teams working to plan and support ministry throughout the province. These teams ebb and flow depending on the needs of our congregations and province and on the availability and passion of leaders. Many working groups are on hiatus due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. With the creation of the commission the working groups will continue to strengthen our work together as they provide an opportunity for collaboration and leadership for the particular passions and needs of people in our churches and beyond. We welcome you to explore the current working groups on our website and to reach out if you have ideas for assets you have that could be used to meet needs in our congregations and province.

Personnel Transitions

In 2019, we welcomed Austin Craver as our Technical Production Coordinator. He is a invaluable part of our team helping with video editing and production, social media and communication supports.

In 2021, Ruth Cole Burcaw and Hanna Jackson moved into new positions from the BCM. Both Ruth and Hanna provided vital leadership and support to our organization and congregations over the years and during the pandemic. We are very grateful for the leadership of Ruth, the former Executive Director of the BCM, that led the organization so well for many years and was instrumental in supporting congregations to meet the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic through tech support, trainings and regular communication and connection throughout. We celebrated with Ruth upon her acceptance of the Executive Director position with City with Dwellings in Winston-Salem. We trust that the gifts she shared with us for her nine years at the BCM will be a blessing to the work and development of their important organization in the city of Winston.

We are grateful Hanna Cheek Jackson's work with youth and communications. In her time with us she shaped our regular e-news offerings, website development, Regional Youth Council, college age ministry and supported the overall work of the BCM. We wish Hanna well in her new position!

In July 2022, we will celebrate with Beth Hayes who will be retiring from her position after 37 years! Beth has brought energy and support for faith formation in so many valuable ways over the years.

We have certainly been blessed by her work among us and will miss her. She has worked to develop the resource center, managed many years of curriculum orders, Moravian curriculum development, congregational consulting, Christian Educator support and certification processes, and so much more.

We welcomed Nancy Sawtelle as Interim Communications Coordinator to support our regular e-news and other email communications.

Transition to Commission on Congregational Development

In the last year of this Inter-synodal period the Board of Cooperative Ministries (BCM) has transitioned into the Commission on Congregational Development at the direction of the Provincial Elders' Conference. Throughout the years the BCM has shifted its internal structure to better serve its purpose and the congregations in the Southern Province. The most recent shift was made in an effort to better meet the needs of congregations through the shared ministry of our province.

With the change to the Commission on Congregational Development (CCD) we welcomed Rev. Rebecca Craver as the Director of Congregational Development. Rebecca's experience in a variety of ministry setting in the Northern Province, work as the chair of the Healthier Congregations Taskforce, and Board leadership in the Canadian District will serve us as we grow into this model of ministry. We are excited to have her to convene the appointed members of the CCD and to work to support individual congregations through consultation and support the shared provincial ministry through our mission *to equip Moravian Christians and congregations to be agents of God's transforming love in the world. We will do this by providing resources for spiritual growth, community, and mission.*

Along with the move in structure, our offices and resource center have physically moved into the Cedarhyrst building at 459 S. Church St. This move has financial and relational benefits for our shared ministry. We look forward to the opportunities for collaboration and support between the Provincial administration, Unity Women's Desk, Provincial Women's Board and the CCD. Come visit us to see the new form of the resource center and our creative space that is available for small group planning and board meetings!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Rebecca Craver