

Report to the Southern Province Synod of 2022 From the Interprovincial Board of Communication (IBOC)

About the IBOC

The IBOC makes visible the life of the Moravian Church and provides resources that equip individuals and congregations for ministry and spiritual growth. It works to tell the story of the Moravian Church in America through print and electronic media, while providing communication, education and worship resources that help connect, inform and inspire.

The IBOC provides services to both the Northern and Southern Provinces and collaborates closely with many agencies of the Moravian Church, including the Board of World Mission, Moravian Music Foundation, Moravian Ministries Foundation in America, Commission on Congregational Development, Provincial Women's Boards, Unity Women's Desk, Moravian Theological Seminary, Moravian camping ministries and provincial and district leaderships.

The IBOC Board of Directors includes members from each Province. We are grateful for the service of our current Southern Province representatives, including the Rev. Ginny Tobiassen (Board chair), Peggy Carter (PEC representative), Paul Knouse and Margaret Couch. Our staff includes Mike Riess, executive director; Sue Kiefner, communications assistant; and Jill Bruckart, business and customer relations assistant.

Key Responsibilities

- ***The Moravian Magazine***, the official journal of the Moravian Church in America. Both in print and online, we chronicle and share the life, faith, people and happenings of the North American church. Every Moravian household in the Northern and Southern Provinces receives the magazine as a benefit of membership in the church.
- The North American editions of the ***Moravian Daily Texts***, one of the oldest continuously published daily devotionals in the world. Each year, we compile, edit, design, produce and ship four editions of this daily devotional, along with the Directory & Statistics of the Moravian Church in America. We also produce digital editions of the *Daily Texts* for the Amazon Kindle and other tablets and a Daily Texts app for both iOS and Android. Nearly 25,000 people subscribe to the Daily Texts via e-mail and on Facebook.
- **www.Moravian.org**, the Moravian Church in America's main web presence. The site is a central promotional and informational resource for those interested in learning more about—and connecting with—the Moravian Church. The Moravian.org structure, managed by the IBOC, hosts sites for the Southern and Northern Provinces, each of the Northern Province's districts, the Commission for Congregational Development, the Board of World Mission, Laurel Ridge and several other ministries of the church. In addition, we manage Facebook pages for the *Moravian Daily Texts* and *The Moravian Magazine*.
- **Publications of the Moravian Church in America**. The IBOC offers more than 40 titles, along with worship and congregational resources, sacramental certificates, Moravian gift items and the Sunday bulletin service. IBOC also maintains responsibility for the *Moravian Book of Worship*.
- **Communication resources** for the Church. We provide communication counsel and expertise, digital worship and music resources, design options, images, copyright guidance, workshops and other resources to congregations and church agencies in both provinces.
- **Church member database/official Directory & Statistics maintenance**. In partnership with the Moravian Ministries Foundation in America, the IBOC processes changes to the church member database for the two provinces. We also compile and publish the official Directory & Statistics of the Church in North America and the yearly Moravian Church Desk Calendar & Plan Book, with lectionary readings and Moravian-specific information.

Summary of Activities

Provincial funding supports many aspects of the IBOC's ongoing ministries. It helps fund our key programs and the staff to make them possible. As our operating expenses are predominantly program-driven, provincial support is vital to our ability to deliver on our main activities. During the latest intersynodal period, the IBOC continued many of its traditional activities while expanding into new areas to meet needs brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moravian Magazine

- Continued print publication of *The Moravian*, now in its 51st year as a combined Northern and Southern Province publication. All Moravian households receive the magazine as a benefit of membership. The magazine is edited and designed completely in-house, with content contributions from Moravians across the provinces. We are currently exploring a redesign of the publication.
- All issues of *The Moravian* are also available online. Issues are presented using Issuu, a service which allows the magazine to be viewed on screen as it looks in print, while all articles are presented as individual posts.
- In 2020, we engaged a new printer for the magazine, improving quality and production timelines while reducing costs by more than 10 percent. We also reconfigured our mailing process to further reduce costs. While these moves have improved certain aspects of magazine production, pandemic-related issues caused scheduling and production delays; we are also facing issues with paper supplies that may further impact distribution. We continue to monitor these issues and work to mitigate them as we can.

Moravian Daily Texts

- Production of the annual *Moravian Daily Texts* for North America remains a major responsibility of our ministry. Daily Texts sales represent a significant portion of our annual revenue.
- Each year, our staff invites writers from both provinces to select hymns and write prayers for the devotional. We then compile, edit, produce and distribute the publication in four different editions (paperback, hardcover, large print and journal) while offering German and Spanish language editions. Distribution of the Daily Texts is handled from our offices in Bethlehem, Pa. IBOC also arranges for translation of Bible verses from German to English which is used around the world.
- Revenues from the Daily Texts have remained relatively constant of the last four-year period, while overall volumes have declined slightly. To help offset increased costs, we instituted a minor price increase in 2020. We are also exploring enhanced promotion and sampling opportunities to increase Daily Texts distribution.
- We continue to offer the Daily Texts in digital eBook format (for Amazon Kindle and Apple iBooks) and as an app for iOS and Android.
- The Moravian Daily Texts is also e-mailed daily to nearly 15,000 people, while we have more than 10,000 followers on Facebook.

Moravian.org/Online efforts

- In 2018, we completely redesigned the Moravian.org website and online store. This redesign offered an updated appearance, improved navigation and increased flexibility in design and content.
- Using the new web structure, the IBOC now hosts websites for the Northern and Southern Provinces (www.mcnp.org and www.msop.org), each of the Northern Province Districts, the Board of World Mission (www.moravianmission.org), the Commission for Congregational Development (www.moravian.org/ccd) and several other agency sites, while also providing hosting for Laurel Ridge's site (www.laurelridge.org). This umbrella structure offers a significant cost savings, provides a consistent web interface and better connects our ministries, while offering participating ministries control over their content.

- In 2020, working with a team from the Board of Cooperative Ministries, the Moravian Music Foundation, Moravian Church Without Walls and individuals from both provinces, we introduced a dedicated website, www.moravianchristmas.org, that provided extensive resources and materials to help individuals and congregations prepare Advent and Christmas celebrations during the pandemic. (see below under “Communications Resources” for more.)

Publications of the Moravian Church in America.

- Developed and printed a new information brochure about the Moravian Church for congregational and community use; each congregation received a supply, with additional copies available for purchase.
- Working with the Interprovincial Faith & Order Commission, completed design and production of the new Moravian Catechism, with distribution to all congregations in 2021. In addition, at the request of the Southern Province PEC, we distributed a copy of the Catechism to each Moravian member household. We continue to make it available in print and electronic form through Moravian.org.
- Produced *Readings for Holy Week* Audio edition, a five-CD set of the spoken word and music of the Moravian Holy Week reading services. Initially designed for use by those unable to attend Readings services in person, the audio edition proved most useful during Holy Week of 2020 and 2021 when congregations limited in-person services.
- Continued to offer the weekly bulletin service to more than 80 congregations. With COVID-19, sales of our bulletin service offerings have decreased, but are beginning to rebound.
- Utilized digital short-run printing processes as a cost-effective method to keep several central titles in stock, including *All About Moravians*, *Becoming a Member*, *Foundations of Our Faith*, and *Park Benches*.
- Became U.S. distributor of *Our Moravian Treasures*, published by the Moravian Unity; we will reprint in the U.S. in 2022.
- Added five Moravian-themed titles from Penn State Press to our catalog to expand our educational offerings.
- Completed re-publication of the *Moravian Book of Worship Planning Manual* and *Graceful Steps* resources.
- Edited, designed and produced annual study books for the Provincial Women’s Board (total of seven since 2018).
- Introduced Moravian-themed face masks, coffee mugs, lapel pins, and other items to help generate revenue for our ministry. Also partnered with Board of World Mission to offer their Mission Coffee.
- Continued work on revisions to *Jesus Still Lead On: A Study Guide to the Covenant for Christian Living and Ground of the Unity*. Expected publication fall 2022.
- Developing several new resources for completion in 2022, including a collection of writing based on the Moravian lectionary and two essay collections by pastors. In addition, we will begin a review/revision process of key new member publications.

Communication Resources and Inter-ministry Collaboration

IBOC played a central role in providing liturgical and music resources, communications consulting, technical expertise and other assistance to congregations and agencies facing the challenges of COVID-19.

- Provided electronic versions of key *Moravian Book of Worship* and other topical and seasonal liturgies for congregational use in developing virtual and alternative worship services.
- Identified and repurposed existing music recordings and produced new recordings of public domain liturgical and seasonal Moravian hymns.
- Provided images, slide backgrounds and other resources to help with online services.
- Provided technical and creative consultations with congregations and agencies learning new communication methods like Zoom, video/audio production and member outreach.

- Offered copyright guidance and resources to help congregations meet requirements for streaming.
- Assembled and curated a dedicated website for Advent and Christmas, with liturgies, newly-recorded music, images, activities and more to help congregations with the 2020 and 2021 seasons, while continually expanding materials for Lent and other church seasons.
- Produced a special PDF distribution edition of *Readings for Holy Week* to accompany online Holy Week events.
- Collaborated with Moravian Music Foundation, Board of World Mission, Board of Cooperative Ministries, Moravian Church Without Walls and local congregations and ministries to present online Sunday worship services and Readings for Holy Week services during lockdown periods.

Beyond worship and music resources and in addition to our day-to-day interactions and support of our congregations and ministry partners, the IBOC:

- Partnered with the Board of Cooperative Ministries (and the new Commission on Congregational Development) to offer training as part of their Leadership Focus Series
- Developed benefit contact materials for Southern Province HR
- Produced booklets on Biblical Interpretation and Racial Reconciliation for the Southern Province
- Produced the Board of World Mission Annual Reports
- Produced *The Hinge* in association with the Center for Moravian Studies
- Provided technical assistance for the Moravian Music Festival 2021 virtual event
- Supported provinces with introduction and continuation of the Moravian Day of Service
- Supported Moravian Ministries Foundation In America's Day of Giving efforts

Future Direction and Opportunities

The IBOC will continue to transform its communication ministry to meet the changing needs of the church. While much of our work is publication-focused, we continue to explore and recommend technologies and best practices to provide congregations and church agencies with resources, information and tools to help them enhance their ministries.

Over the coming year, the IBOC will evaluate its core activities and responsibilities to ensure that our efforts remain effective and relevant. We will continue improving *The Moravian Magazine*; evolving our online, community and media presence; strengthening inter-agency collaboration; enhancing our online store; and expanding resources for congregations, agencies and members. We will also look to update core new-member publications, worship materials and other resources, while expanding our outreach.

We appreciate the ongoing support of the Southern Province and look forward to continuing our efforts to provide resources, expertise and communication opportunities to the province, its congregations and its members.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Riess, Executive Director, IBOC