

The Prospective of the American Moravian Church in its Overseas Mission

by Theodore F. Hartmann, Bethlehem, Pa., U.S.A.

The Moravian Church in North America consists of four provinces. Two of these provinces, the Moravian Church, Northern Province with churches in the United States and in the Alberta Province in Western Canada, and the Moravian Church, Southern Province have established an Interprovincial Board of World Mission. This board has a relationship with several other provinces of the Moravian Unity. These relationships have been established by Unity Synod. Two of these provinces, Alaska and Labrador, lie within the geographic boundaries of Canada and the United States. Other provinces having this association are the Eastern West Indies, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua Provinces. It is recognized that all provinces are autonomous but that these associations provide the opportunity for providing manpower and financial assistance. The American Moravian churches, together with the American United Methodist and United Presbyterian Churches have an ecumenical relationship with the Dominican Evangelical Church in the Dominican Republic. There is also a secondary relationship together with the British and Danish Moravian Churches with the Western Tanzania Province. The primary relationship with Western Tanzania has been assigned to the British Province.

The directors of the Board of World Mission represent both the Northern and Southern Provinces of the American Moravian Church. The Unity of the Brethren, a sister denomination in Texas whose spiritual roots are in the ministry of John Hus also have an advisory member on the board of directors. This group has a special interest in the Honduras Province and has supplied manpower and financial aid for this province. They also use the facilities of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem for the training of their ministers. The full board, consisting of thirteen elected and three advisory members, meets semi-annually. An Executive Committee, consisting of six of the total membership, meets on call to handle special matters referred to it by staff. The staff consists of an Executive Director, a Business Director / Treasurer and an office secretary.

The board has an on-going program of Goal Setting, Strategizing and Evaluation in order to keep the program of the board relevant to the needs and requests of the associated provinces within the limitations of the board. The following Statement of Purpose has been established:

Our mission as a church is to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed. Jesus Christ brings persons everywhere into a redemptive and transforming relationship with himself and leads them to know, love and serve their fellowmen. Christians, individually and together, have the responsibility for bringing the Gospel to bear on

all aspects of human life and society. Our mission is an extension of Christ's earthly life and ministry. The Holy Spirit moves and enables us to respond to all human needs with a wide range of ministries. As a Board of World Mission of the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in North America, our response is focused on those locations assigned to these provinces by the Moravian Unity Synod of the Moravian Church and to us by the PEC's of these provinces.

Using this statement as the basis for our program, Goals and Strategies have been adopted. A list of them follows:

1. We shall assist congregations in their understanding of and participation in world mission. a) We shall continue to work with the Provincial Women's Boards. The Executive Director shall meet with the Provincial Women's Boards for the specific purpose of gathering data concerning service projects, workshops, monthly mission studies and other of their world mission activities. b) We shall work with the Board of Educational Ministries and Board of Christian Education and Evangelism on developing materials for world mission education. We shall provide resources in the Biblical basis for world mission, Moravian world mission history and contemporary opportunities for world mission. A "Readiness for Mission" program has been developed for use in the fall of 1982 as part of the 250th anniversary of the beginning of Moravian mission. c) We shall use the North American MORAVIAN for world mission education, including articles and special features on world mission from a variety of perspectives and with a variety of presentations. d) We shall assist in planning mission conferences, seminars and festivals in local congregations and in regional meetings. e) We shall provide opportunities for Christians from other cultures to share their faith and Christian experience with us. i . We shall continue to make available short-term visitors to speak at the theological seminary and to church groups, including church camps and retreats while on visits here. i i . For the present we shall encourage short-term ministerial exchanges with other provinces, subject to the approval of the national Provincial boards.
2. We shall assist theological students and pastors in the task of educating and motivating congregations in world mission. a) The Executive Director will contact the various ministers' groups within both provinces and schedule meetings with them in order to explain to them the present developments and opportunities in world mission in affiliated provinces. b) The Executive Director shall provide the ministers with material on current world mission concerns for designated Prayer Days. c) We shall continue to work with Moravian Theological Seminary in conducting special training in world mission concerns for theological students. d) We shall continue to provide opportunities for furloughed missionaries to meet with students at the Seminary. e) The Executive Director shall continue to confer with Moravian Theological Seminary to determine current curriculum dealing with world mission.
3. We shall publicize opportunities for people to serve as fraternal workers and assist those who respond in preparation for effective ministry. a) We shall consult with the Provincial Boards of the . associated provinces regarding personnel needs and develop job descriptions for positions that might be filled by fraternal workers.

b) We shall inform our congregations of these needs. c) Persons with skills and expertise in the areas of health care, agriculture, specialized teaching, construction, literacy, communications, etc., shall be given opportunities to share these gifts in the name of Christ where needed. These opportunities can be of a short-term or long-term duration. d) We shall screen, test and orient volunteers in accordance with present policy. e) We shall evaluate the performance and program of the volunteers in consultation with the associated provinces.

4. We shall assist associated provinces in becoming self-governing and self-supporting and in developing their own sense of world mission. a) We shall provide specialized personnel as requested for programs of lay training, continuing education, stewardship education, leadership training, home and family life, and goal setting as finances are available. b) We shall provide financial subsidies as needed. c) We shall provide training opportunities for nationals upon consultation with associated provinces.

5. We shall provide assistance in health care, education, agricultural development, community organization, emergency relief, and other social ministries. a) By recruiting and preparing specialized personnel. b) We shall study our use of financial resources as good stewards in the way in which we have shared in the past and explore ways in which we might share in the future. This could include grants to help fund capital investments or development programs. c) We shall continue to provide medical supplies through our membership in Interchurch Medical Assistance.

6. We shall be open and alert to new opportunities for world mission. a) We shall continue to assist associated provinces in meeting opportunities in their areas. b) We shall investigate new opportunities outside of established provinces.

7. We shall participate with the whole church in seeking to influence our nations to make their dealings with other nations just, merciful and peaceable. a) We shall continue to write to legislators in behalf of our board concerning legislation relating to other countries. b) We shall continue to inform our members of such legislation and their support. c) We shall continue to support cooperative agencies in their public education and work to influence governmental policies on world hunger and the distribution of the world's resources, i.e. IMPACT, Bread for the World, Interreligious Taskforce on U.S. Food Policy.

8. We shall help alleviate hunger in the world. a) We shall provide direct relief and shall also assist in the production of food and work for the equitable distribution of the world's resources. i. We shall recruit and train agricultural workers (see 3 above). ii. We shall provide training for nationals in agriculture and cooperative movements. b) We shall provide information to associated provinces on new developments. c) We shall supply funds for agricultural development.

9. We shall cooperate with and use the resources and insights of other agencies, both church related and secular. a) We shall continue to support Mission Aviation Fellowship. b) We shall continue to endorse

and publicize the annual appeal of Church World Service, the "One Great Hour of Sharing." c) We shall continue to endorse Heifer Project International, Agricultural Missions, United Bible Societies, AMDOC, and other support agencies.

10. We shall sharpen our understanding of our purpose and operation as a board. a) We shall arrange for regularly scheduled meetings with the boards of the associated provinces. b) By systematic study of recommended materials we shall acquaint ourselves with the cultures and traditions of the associated provinces. c) We shall examine our role as a board in the light of changing responsibilities and in relation to the other boards and agencies of our provinces. d) We shall provide annually learning programs to enable our board to understand more clearly its functions. e) We shall provide orientation for all new board members.

During the last ten years the responsibility of the Board has been expanded to include new relationships with Western Tanzania and Labrador. Recognizing the needs in those areas, both finance and manpower have been made available. In Nicaragua, because of the change in government there are no longer opportunities to supply manpower although financial aid has been continued including help in establishing new work in Costa Rica. This work is administered by pastors from Nicaragua but financed by our Board.

Financial aid and supplies have been provided to help Miskito refugees who have left Nicaragua and have been settled in Honduras as well as those who have been moved within Nicaragua into new resettlement camps. Our Board has continued to mediate in behalf of these who have been resettled with both the Nicaraguan and United States governments.

Special educational opportunities have been provided in cooperation with Moravian College and Theological Seminary for persons from Africa, the Caribbean and Central America. Those helped have been both pastors and lay persons.

There has been a definite change in relationships between our Board and our affiliated provinces. Recognizing their autonomy our role has changed from one of administration to one of response and support. Cooperatively we have attempted to set goals and strategies and then within our limitations of finance and manpower, to respond to the requests presented to us.

Our Board is dependent almost entirely on the financial support we get from our own Moravian members. We have received limited help, from two other denominations, the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Church of Canada. We are grateful for this help. We are a member of the Division of Overseas Ministries of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States. Contacts made with other denominations have helped us, especially in specialized ministries such as community development and health care.

Through an annual meeting with representatives of the British and European Moravian communities, we have been able to establish a better relationship with those who also have been assigned special relationships with our Affiliated Provinces in the Third World.

The Board of World Mission recognizes its responsibility to minister to the whole man. This is in accordance with Christ's example and

command. We recognize the special responsibility which we as Canadians and Americans have to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the world. Our ministry should be within the context of the guidelines which have been adopted by the provinces with whom we are associated. Together we can strengthen the fraternal relationships which should exist within the World-wide Unity of the Brethren, the Unitas Fratrum.

Zusammenfassung

Die Aufgaben der amerikanischen Brüderkirche in der Weltmission

Die nordamerikanische und die südamerikanische Provinz der Brüderkirche unterhalten gemeinsam eine Direktion für Weltmission (Board of World Mission). Der Verfasser beschreibt die Ziele und Aufgabenstellung dieser Institution. Sie hat eine besondere finanzielle und personelle Verantwortung für die Provinzen Alaska, Labrador, östliche Westindische Inseln, Guyana, Honduras und Nicaragua; sie unterstützt zugleich mit England und Dänemark die Provinz Westtansania. Verbindungen bestehen zu der Evangelischen Kirche der Dominikanischen Republik und der Brüderunität (Unity of the Brethren) in Texas.

Der Verfasser stellt einen Aufgabenkatalog mit zehn Punkten auf.

1. Beteiligung der Gemeinden an Aufgaben der Weltmission (z.B. Planung von Missionskonferenzen, Missionsseminaren und -festen, Begegnungen mit anderen Kirchen und Vertretern aus anderen Provinzen der Brüdergemeinde)
2. Motivierung der Theologiestudenten und Pfarrer für die Mission
3. Einsatz von freiwilligen und ehrenamtlichen Mitarbeitern, wo immer sich die Gelegenheit bietet
4. Förderung der assoziierten Provinzen auf ihrem Weg zu voller Selbständigkeit und eigenen missionarischen Aktivitäten
5. Verstärkter Einsatz für die Entwicklungshilfe (z.B. im Gesundheitswesen, in Erziehung und Landwirtschaft)
6. Offenheit für neue Aufgaben und Wege
7. Verantwortungsbewußtsein für eine gerechtere, barmherzigere und friedfertigere Gesellschaft
8. Beteiligung im Kampf gegen den Hunger in der Welt
9. Stärkere Zusammenarbeit mit anderen kirchlichen und weltlichen Einrichtungen
10. Deutlicheres Erfassen von Zweck und Funktion der eigenen Direktion.

Mit der Brüderkirche in Nicaragua wurde eine neue Arbeit in Costa Rica begonnen. Finanziell lebt die Direktion für Weltmission fast ausschließlich von der Unterstützung durch die Mitglieder der Brüdergemeinde. Zuschüsse wurden von der Presbyterianischen Kirche der USA und der United Church von Canada gewährt.