

THE PROVINCIAL ELDERS' CONFERENCE

(EXECUTIVE BOARD)

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THE MORAVIAN CHURCH • Northern Province

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this first week of July, the Moravian Church Northern Province has observed Canada Day on July 1 and Independence Day on July 4 – two celebrations of national pride and identity – and the anniversary of the martyrdom of John Hus on July 6 – when we remember not only what one man died for, but more importantly, what one man lived for.

Today, the Moravian Church Northern Province grieves for lives lost – in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota, and in Dallas, Texas – victims of violence. We grieve for lives lost in Baghdad and Bangladesh – also victims of violence. Each of these lives matters, regardless of their color. Each of these lives, whether police officers or victims of police brutality or terrorism, were killed for reasons that are deeply disturbing. Each of these lives matter, whether Christian or Muslim or something else. Each of these lives matter because every one was created in the image of God, holy and beloved.

In 1415, as John Hus faced a decision to recant his faith and live, or stand firm in his faith and die, some of his friends urged him to say whatever was needed to stay alive, arguing that he could do more good for the cause alive than dead. John Hus could not turn his back on God and the faith he held so strongly, and thus was burned at the stake on July 6. We Moravians often talk about what he died for. Today, I believe we need to talk about what John Hus lived for – a world where individuals can hold the faith of their choosing, where ordinary people can speak truth to power, where everyday folks can live peacefully without the fear of violence, where people of every color can live in community, and people of every religion or no religion at all care for one another, where all lives are sacred and God is honored as holy.

I call on Moravians everywhere to live for our faith so that others no longer need to die for their faith, or their color, or their position, or their economic status. I invite us to acknowledge and confess our own role in fomenting racism and religious discrimination, whether by our deeply held, interior prejudices, or our silence in the public sphere. I call on every Moravian to abandon the excuse that such violence against black lives or police officers or children or immigrants doesn't happen 'in our back yard'. Take the initiative and risk leaving the safety of our churches and neighborhoods to establish authentic relationships with our brothers and sisters across town, in the 'back yards' that exist in every community. It is time for us – as people of faith – to say 'enough' and find ways to build bridges of love and hope. It is time for us – as people of faith – to say 'yes' to loving, respecting, and caring for our neighbors across the street and around the world.



Betsy Miller
President, Provincial Elders' Conference
Moravian Church Northern Province