



Unity Mission Agreement Moravian Church Missions in a time of Globalization

Mission is our calling

We are living in a challenging time for the Moravian Church and our global mission. There are more brothers and sisters in the Moravian Unity today than ever before. Moravians praise God and read the Scriptures in dozens of languages across the globe, and the Moravian Church is more culturally diverse than ever. This growth, geographical spread, and diversity means that Moravians are also faced with significant challenges in our globalized economy. There is an ever growing gap between rich and poor throughout the world. Civil wars and other conflicts ravage many nations, leaving millions as stateless refugees. Countless people are living on the margins of society and suffer from poverty, hunger, addiction, and despair. The destruction of nature is accelerating rather than abating, and climate change now threatens the well-being of over a billion people.

It can be tempting to retreat from the challenges, but mission has been at the heart of the Moravian Church since its renewal in Herrnhut in 1727. Moravians were called to go to the despised, rejected, and frightened people in the margins of the world to share their lives to show them Christ's love. "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:10) Moravians still believe that no one on this earth is God-forsaken; all people are made in the image of God. All people are our brothers and sisters because we share the same image of God. Our mission may be anywhere at any time whenever and wherever God calls us to go and serve.

In 1957 our modern Moravian Unity was established to facilitate and expand our global mission while retaining our unity as Moravian brothers and sisters. We are living in the midst of globalization, which provides extraordinary new opportunities for mission and building communities of faith. But globalization also brings great challenges.

Our Unity: a gift, a witness and a task

Our Moravian Unity is a gift, a witness and a task.

- It is a precious *gift* we have received as a heritage from our ancestors in faith. This gift we need to maintain as a source of inspiration for our own mission. It is part of our heritage that we believe that our Unity is a gift of our Chief Elder, Jesus Christ.
- Through our Lord and Savior we are bound together in a fellowship of love and forgiveness. Unity does not mean agreement in all things, but it does mean a willingness to love one another, care for one another, and pray for one another.

- Our Unity is a powerful *witness* to the world that we remain together despite our cultural, economic, and linguistic differences. More than that, we Moravians care for each other in our Unity: “If one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer with it.” (I Cor. 12:22)
- Our Unity is also a *task* given to us. We have to invest energy, time, prayer, and money to maintain the Unity and renew it. We do this not for the sake of the Unity itself, but because of our witness to the world.
- We therefore commit ourselves to work together to maintain our Moravian Unity. We will not allow theological and cultural differences to break our communion, but will seek the open dialogue with each other to solve conflicts among us. In this we are a token of Christ’s reconciliation working through us in the world.

Sent out as agents of God's love

Mission means “being sent”. We are sent to other people and cultures in humility following Jesus Christ and proclaiming his Good News. In the past, missionaries were sent from Europe to cross oceans and geographical boundaries to reach out to the so-called “heathen”, but we have learned that there are many other borders and barriers we have to cross. Our mission is not just cross-cultural, it is multicultural and intercultural. Missionaries today are sent to overcome barriers of race, class, and gender. It is our mission to speak out wherever barriers divide humanity and harm our brothers and sisters. “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:19)

Following the example of Christ, we Moravians strive to overcome the barriers which exclude people and God’s creation from living a sustainable life in peace and dignity, such as racism, power imbalances, and poverty or climate injustice.

We are living in the midst of globalization, which provides extraordinary new opportunities for mission, but also brings great challenges. In the 18th century, Moravians saw their mission in helping those who were hurt by colonization, yet our church also profited from the colonialism and colonial structures, at times even from slavery. The church is still repenting for its role in the slave-economy. In the 21st Century, we have to learn from the lessons of the past. We need to draw each other’s attention to how we Moravians participate in economic globalization and profit from unjust economic and political mechanisms. We are called to be advocates for those who are being harmed by globalization, wherever we and they are. As Christians, we are called to change our way of life so that all God’s creation can be sustained. As missionaries we are called to be agents of God’s justice, love and mercy in a suffering world: South and North, East and West.

Proclaiming the Good News

Mission takes many forms, but it is always a witness to Christ beyond the walls of the church building. Mission includes evangelism and the proclamation of the good news of salvation through Christ. It also includes concrete acts of justice, mercy, hospitality, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The biblical mandate of mission includes tending to the sick, feeding the hungry, hosting the stranger, embracing the enemy, and removing the chains of bondage. Mission is going out into the world in love as Christ loves the world.

Since the time of Zinzendorf, Moravian mission was bold and courageous, but it has also been culturally sensitive, respectful, humble, and mutual. In our mission today, we must be self-critical and seek continually to learn, change, and grow. At this Unity Mission Conference (2017), we heartily affirmed the ecumenical statement *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* as being consistent with Moravian values.

Moravian mission is guided by the Holy Spirit. We celebrate that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world and we seek to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our mission therefore always begins with careful listening and observing the times. Our theological understanding is sensible to the context and at times we are called to raise a prophetic voice in the midst of an unjust world. We go where we feel God is sending us, and we seek those places where the Spirit beckons. We acknowledge that the working of God's Spirit goes beyond our understanding and our church structures. We are open for the signs of the Holy Spirit working outside the church and even outside Christianity revealing God's love for this world. (John 3:16-17)

Participating in God's mission to the world

Mission belongs to God. We become co-workers and servants of Christ in mission. This gives us confidence despite our own pitfalls and failures. Christ gives us strength and courage to sow the seed of love even though we are not always able to harvest the fruit.

Missionaries are not only those who are physically sent to reach out to others in other lands and cultures. Wherever we are, with our different gifts, we can be involved in Christ's mission. Those who support this mission through their prayers, their financial and other gifts, and their compassion are equally part of the Unity's mission. Those who live a life of obedience and mindfulness, in respect for God's creature and in love of the neighbor, are part of the mission. We acknowledge that the people in the margins of our globalized world have their unique contribution to Christ's mission. Our Moravian mission does not discriminate against people. Our mission is for all people - women and men, children, youth, and adults in every land. Our mission is carried out by all kinds of people. It is part of our mission to promote the dignity and worth of each person. At times we are called to offer a contrast community to demonstrate what the Kingdom of God might look like on earth.

As Moravians we see our mission as part of the worldwide ecumenical missionary movement. Together with all Christians we are on a missionary pilgrimage. In the unity of our mission we embody the prayer of Jesus in John 17. We will therefore cooperate with other Christian churches in our mission because our goal is not to increase the size of the Moravian Church. We also commit ourselves to building sustainable communities of faith that are empowered to engage in their own unique forms of mission and ministry.

Our goal as Moravian in mission is simply to do the work of Christ in this world. We follow the One who came into the world to give life in abundance to all. We embrace our calling and mission with joy and hope because this mission brings us ever closer to our Savior and the reign of God on earth.