

Moravian Understanding of Ministry and the Selection and Training of Ministers Based on Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum and the British Province Book of Order

Ordained Ministry

The Moravian Church recognises the priesthood of all believers. All members may gladly and confidently carry on their work in and for the congregation and by their devotion and faithfulness all can render service to the whole church.

The Moravian Church also has specifically appointed ministers who are called and ordained by Jesus Christ, whom the church acknowledges as its Chief Elder. The ministry of the ordained is an expression of the ministry of the whole people of God and a response to the call and gifts of Christ, who is Chief Elder of the church and its ministry.

The orders of the ministry in the Moravian Church are those of Deacons, Presbyters and Bishops. Those who are ordained are authorised to administer the sacraments. The orders are expressions of service rather than rank. Only one is recognised as having authority in himself: Jesus Christ who also served.

The Unitas Fratrum recognises the priesthood of all believers but also has specifically appointed ministers who receive commission and authority for their service from the hands of Jesus Christ, whom the Church acknowledges as its Chief Elder. All members may gladly and confidently carry on their work in and for the congregation and by their devotion and faithfulness all can render service to the whole Church.

(COUF, #104.a)

The understanding of Christ being the Chief Elder is the basis for the understanding of the Ministry in the Moravian Church. The Unitas Fratrum underlines the priesthood of all believers, as well as the calling of specifically appointed and ordained ministers. The offices of the ministry are a gift from the Chief Elder. Those called into the constituted orders of the Moravian Church are called and ordained by Christ. (COUF, Section 1 – Church Order, Chapter XIII – The Ministry, Introduction, paragraph 1)

The constituted orders of the ministry in the Moravian Church are those of Deacons, Presbyters and Bishops. Those who are ordained, are authorized to administer the Sacraments in the Moravian Church. This ministry of the ordained is an expression of the ministry of the whole people of God and a response to the call and gifts of Christ Who is Chief Elder of the Church and its ministry. The orders are expressions of service rather than rank. Only One is recognized as having authority in Himself: Jesus the Christ Who also served. Persons feeling a call to ordained ministry in the Moravian Church shall be given equal consideration without reference to their sex.

(COUF, #682)

SEE ALSO COUF SECTIONS 685 TO 693

Service

The ordained minister, whether Deacon, Presbyter or Bishop, is a servant of God and the congregation. He or she is never considered the head or the body of the congregation, but often serves as the congregation's mouth, hands, and feet as the church bears witness to the love of Christ. The ordained minister is solely a servant to the Lord, ministering to Christ

by serving the congregation and its neighbours. In this role of servant, he or she is called together with the Congregation Committee to lead the congregation with Godly conduct essential to effective ministry. Ordained ministers are also called to maintain within the congregation the structure and order provided by Provincial and Unity Synods.

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(COUF, Section 1 – Church Order, Chapter XIII – The Ministry, Introduction, paragraph 2)

Call System

The ordained minister remains a servant of Christ and the church as a whole, not merely of the congregation to which he or she is called. Even as Jesus Christ came not to be ministered unto but to minister, so his servants should be willing to minister wherever the church calls them under the leading of the Holy Spirit. In calling a minister, the Provincial Board take into account not only the needs of the particular office, and the suitability of the individual, but also the needs of the Province as a whole.

Those in the non-stipendiary ministry exercise their ministry through service in a particular congregation or district to which they have been called by the Provincial Board. They will not be called to move away from home in order to exercise this ministry, unless they offer so to move.

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(COUF, #684, paragraph 1)

In calling a person to any office in the Moravian Church, the Provincial Board giving the call shall take into account not only the needs of the particular office, and the suitability for that post of the individual, but also the needs of the other offices in the church and of the Province as a whole...

(Book of Order, section 25.1)

Those in the non-stipendiary ministry... exercise their ministry through service in a particular congregation or district to which they have been called by the Provincial Board and, in addition, some may exercise a more general ministry in their daily employment... They will not be called to move away from home in order to exercise this ministry, unless they offer so to move.

(Book of Order, section 22.1.a.2)

Conduct

To be ordained as a minister means to be under the order and authority of the church. Every person in church service must observe the regulations enacted by the Provincial Synod and obey the direction of the church boards authorised by it.

The ordained minister must be knowledgeable about the Moravian understanding of the role of ministry and live and act accordingly. The personal character of ministers must be such as to support the word they teach, and such as shall in truth and love win the support of their brothers and sisters, so that they can firmly and kindly help individual souls and wisely lead in common worship and church life.

From the personal nature of the minister's work, it is most important that his or her spouse be in full sympathy with that work.

The minister is a brother or sister, who is called to the ordained service, and to whom the church has certain expectations concerning conduct and lifestyle as spelled out in Provincial constitutions. To be ordained as a minister means to be under the order and authority of the church.

(COUF, #684, paragraph 2)

Every person in church service must observe the regulations from time to time in force by enactment of the Synod, and obey the directions of the church boards, authorised by it, in regards to the duties, place and other conditions of office to which he/she is called.

(Book of Order, section 24.3)

The ordained minister must be knowledgeable about the Moravian understanding of the role of ministry and live and act accordingly.

(COUF, Section 1 – Church Order, Chapter XIII – The Ministry, Introduction, paragraph 3)

The personal character of ministers must be such as shall support the word they teach, and such as shall in truth and love win the support of their brothers and sisters, so that they can firmly and kindly help individual souls and wisely lead in common worship and church life.

(Book of Order, section 24.2)

From the personal nature of the minister's work, it is most important that his/her spouse be in full sympathy with that work. It is desirable that a minister's spouse be a member of the Moravian Church.

(Book of Order, section 24.4)

Selection and Training

The requirements for any form of church service are: a love of Christ and wholehearted devotion to his kingdom; a readiness to carry out the duties of ministerial office as set out in the Book of Order; the ability to follow an approved course of study.

Applications to enter church service are made to the Provincial Board stating the applicant's qualifications and reasons for applying. Applications are examined by the Church Service Committee, who report to the Provincial Board. The final decision to accept an applicant for training for the ministry rests with the Provincial Board.

For those who are accepted for training for the ministry, courses of preparation and training are prescribed according to the needs of the applicant at an approved college or university, under the direction of the Provincial Board and with the advice of the Church Service Committee. In addition, instruction is given in Moravian Church history, doctrine, tradition and practices, and polity. Candidates are allowed to continue their course of training only so long as they make satisfactory progress and prove themselves in all respects fitted for their calling.

The requirements for Church Service are: a love of Christ and wholehearted devotion to his Kingdom; a readiness to carry out the duties of ministerial office as set out in the Book of Order; the ability to follow an approved course of study.
(Book of Order, section 23.1)

Application to enter Moravian church service must be made to the Provincial Board of the Moravian Church. The applicant must state his/her qualifications and their reasons for wishing to enter service.
(Book of Order, section 23.2.a)

Applications will be examined by the Church Service Committee, who will report to the Provincial Board.
(Book of Order, section 23.2.b)

The final decision to accept an applicant for training for the ministry rests with the Provincial Board.
(Book of Order, section 23.2.d)

Each Province is responsible for the training of its own candidates for Church service. Where Moravian Theological Seminaries exist, candidates attend these, and these institutions are available for the training of students from other parts of the Unity also. At the same time, the Moravian Church welcomes the growing practice whereby training colleges are being established on an inter-denominational basis and uses these whenever practicable for its own students believing that this will further the cause of Christian Unity. In all cases every effort should be made to see that the theological training received be compatible with the teaching of the Moravian Church, and that instruction be given in Moravian Church history, doctrine, tradition and practices, and polity.
(COUF #692, omitted in 2016 edition)

For those who seek to enter ministerial service, courses of preparation and training are prescribed according to the needs of the applicant at some approved college or university, under the direction of the Provincial Board and with the advice of the Church Service Committee. During this period of training every student should be under the supervision of an experienced Moravian minister.
(Book of Order, section 23.3.a)

Candidates will be allowed to continue their course of training only so long as they make satisfactory progress and prove themselves in all respects fitted for their calling.
(Book of Order, section 23.3.c)

Ordination

The Provincial Board has the authority to commission ordination. In extending such a commission they are guided by careful consideration of the spiritual, mental and physical qualifications of the candidate for ordination. The Provincial Board also designates the Bishop who is to officiate in this act.

Only the Provincial Board, the Provincial or Unity Synod has the authority to commission ordination. In extending such a commission they are guided by careful consideration of the spiritual, mental and physical qualifications of the candidate for ordination. The Board also designates the Bishop who is to officiate in this act. Ordination should be preceded by appropriate ministerial training. In the event that an ordained minister is received from another denomination, the Provincial Board is free to receive him or her as a Deacon or Presbyter as it deems appropriate.
(COUF #683)