

Partnering as a Congregation with the Moravian Church

Spring 2023

Dear Church Leadership and Membership,

A partnership with the Moravian Church as a Moravian Fellowship allows your congregation to be independent while receiving support and guidance from the Moravian Church of America, Southern Province leadership and other member churches. No strings attached, no fees to pay, just time to recover from disaffiliation, research other denominations, and plot your best path forward. Best of all, your congregation will be part of a network of over 1550 Moravian Churches serving over 1,100,000 Moravians worldwide.

Because it is possible for your UMC ordained pastor to serve full-time in a Moravian Fellowship, a partnership with the Moravian Church could provide a safety net for your pastor if he/she wishes to remain with your church. Because the Moravian Church shares many of the same beliefs and practices, a partnership with the Moravian Church will bring comfort and familiarity to your worship experiences. Since Moravian Fellowships retain their property, a partnership will support local ownership of your physical church.

Ecumenical Partners

The Southern Province of the Moravian Church in America shares full communion relationships with four ecumenical partners: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Episcopal Church, **the United Methodist Church**, and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Churches in full communion do not need to agree on every doctrinal point, but are understood to have enough in common to worship together. In practice, this means that members of any of these denominations can participate in the same sacraments, and clergy of one denomination can serve a congregation of the other denomination.

The Moravian Church of America, Southern Province wishes to offer a partnership with your Church as you navigate and plan your future. Through our nearly six centuries (since 1457) of existence and since the great reformation of our Church almost 300 years ago (1727), we have opened our hearts and shared our support to all those seeking a relationship with Jesus Christ. We are willing and able to support you with a desire to enhance, not change, who you are as a Community of Faith.

Our partnership with you means:

Your Pastoral Care and the Care of your Pastor:

- Your UMC ordained pastor (retired) can retain his or her credentials, thus maintaining their life-long investment in their faith, affiliations, and benefits.
- Your pastor retains all rights afforded to a fully-ordained clergy while serving your new Moravian entity – a Moravian Fellowship.
- Your pastor is guided and mentored under the care of the Southern Province leadership

offering him/her professional development, mentoring, and pastoral care.

- If your pastor is not transitioning with you, the Southern Province will be happy to provide guidance were possible as you seek a new pastor.

Your Worship and Personal Experience:

- Freedom to control your own Church's experiences.
- Receiving full Sacraments.
- Scripture revealed through action.
- Music you know from the UMC hymnal or the Moravian Book of Worship, including Liturgy readings, seasonal celebrations and more.
- Blends Methodist and Moravian traditions such as Lovefeast celebrations, Holy Week Readings, Easter Sunrise service.
- World and local Missions opportunities are in the Moravian DNA. Missions are why the first Moravians came to Georgia in 1735.

As a Moravian Fellowship (Church/Worship Group)

The business and longevity of your church is respected and in your care.

- Fellowships pay no annual Provincial Share (apportionments).
- You retain and care for your property, all of it.
- Fellowships govern themselves with support from the Province and the Global Moravian Unity.
- Fellowships create their own Constitution (governing) documents.
- Fellowships may send delegates to Provincial Synods (conferences) by invitation.
- Fellowships may be the size of a small group or as large as your full congregation.
- Opt-out, should the direction of your church change, leaving a Moravian Fellowship may be done by letter of intent.

As Moravians we are here to support you, to strengthen you, and to care for you - we will never judge you.

We are happy to meet with you, to listen to your vision and desires, to discuss the advantages of partnering with the Moravian Church, and to provide access to resources to better inform you and your congregation.

A partnership with the Moravian Church provides an Independent Church experience without having to go it alone or committing to another denomination too quickly.

Thank you,



Rev. Dr. Neil Routh
President, Provincial Elders' Conference
Moravian Church in America, Southern Province



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Attachment:

Is the Moravian Church, Southern Province a Viable Option for Affiliation?

Written by Rev. Dr. Neil Routh