

As ecumenical officer of the province, I represent the Moravian Church in a few different settings. One is on the governing board of CUIC, Churches Uniting in Christ. In the 1960s a number of denominations formed CoCU, the Consultation on Church Union, an attempt to merge major U.S. denominations. For various reasons, including the question whether it would be a wise expense of energies, that goal has faded, and early in this century CoCU became CUIC, focused on helping churches (a) to recognize and more easily share their ordained leadership and (b) to fight racism. In 2006, the Northern Province joined ten other denominations—some predominantly black, some predominantly white—as a member of CUIC.

Recognizing and exchanging pastors may seem like a simple task for Moravians, as we have a number of pastors who started service in another denomination. But even we have found that matters like pensions can make this complicated. And for some other groups, negative past interactions or one group feeling devalued by another, may make sharing ministers more difficult.

Fighting racism may also seem simple. After all, the Moravian Church is a worldwide church and a predominantly black church (located mainly in Africa and the Caribbean), historically best known for its missionary work. The Northern Province is about 15 percent people of color, but they are concentrated in New York and a few other large cities in the United States and Canada, so that most Moravians in the province do not see diversity of color at Sunday worship.

One thing clear to me from working with CUIC's mix of persons of varied ethnic backgrounds is how black persons of faith and white persons of faith have different views of life in the United States and Canada. Many people who are white, as I am, think of America as primarily white. Many people who are black believe that they are treated differently and unfairly by police. Many people who are white believe racism is a thing of the past. Many people who are black are sure that racism is alive and well. I believe that one of our major tasks as a church of Jesus Christ is to try to understand people in our Christian family who see and experience life differently.

So I hope that within the Moravian Church, with other churches, and with non-Christians, we can create, or take advantage of, opportunities to listen to and better understand people who see life differently. For example, in my neighborhood, only a week after several local Muslim young adults were sentenced for terrorism-related activity, during Thanksgiving week Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims gathered to sing and pray and then eat together and discuss our faiths' understanding of gratitude. Our state council of churches has encouraged "respectful conversations" about a number of issues, including guns and Israel/Palestine, helping Christians to be "sources of living water, cooling the heat of intense disagreements."

*Lord Jesus, our Chief Elder, help us to listen better, to understand better, to work together better, with those who don't see things the same way we do. Amen.*

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