



Unity Prayer Day

An annual day of prayer in
the worldwide Moravian Church

On the road to Haflong © Sr Roberta Hoey

The Prayer Watch

The Moravian Church is a church in which prayer plays an important role. Very well known is the Unity Prayer Watch, which is in principle the uninterrupted prayer by brothers and sisters around the Unity. Each Province is asked to do a 24 hours prayer watch on a number of days each year. Originally it started in 1727, when the brothers and sisters in Herrnhut, Germany, decided to covenant for an 'hourly intercession'. It was in the days after the 13th of August that a number of brothers and sisters decided to take responsibility for what was understood as a 'holy watch over the congregation'. The inspiration was found in the words 'to pray without ceasing', (1. Thess. 5,17). Members of the congregation in Herrnhut signed up for praying for an hour, and the prayer watch had become a reality. It was known as the 'hourly intercession'. The hourly intercession was exercised in many Moravian congregations until 1825. So this unbroken chain of prayer had been going on for almost 100 years. It has been called the longest prayer meeting in the history of the church. It ceased to exist for a number of years but was reinstated as a service of the Moravian Church to the world, when the 'Prayer Watch' in which Moravians around the world participate, was re-established in 1957, the 500th



The present bamboo church in Haflong

anniversary of the Unitas Fratrum. This still continues. The British Province and the South African Province have been asked to take the prayer watch on June 26th to July 9th.

The Unity Prayer Day, the Unity Offering

Another service of prayer, offered by the Moravian Church worldwide, is the Unity Prayer Day. The Unity Synod 1967 decided that the Sunday nearest March 1st should be observed as 'Unity Prayer Day'. The 1st of March is the date for commemoration of the founding of the Unitas Fratrum, the Ancient Unity, which was founded on 1st of March 1457 in the village of Kunvald in the Bohemian mountains. There is a strong symbolism in making the Sunday closest to the 1st of March the Unity Prayer Day. It is an appropriate way of not only commemorating the founding of the Unity, but it is also a living and vibrant tradition to spend that day in prayer.

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Talking about Poverty and Brexit

In last month's editorial I looked at official definitions of poverty and this month I have tried to put some flesh on these rather dry bones. The starting figure for these figures is the median household income. This is the income of what would be the middle household, if all households in the UK were sorted in a list from poorest to richest. As it represents the middle of the income distribution, the median household income provides a good indication of the standard of living of the 'typical' household in terms of income.

The provisional estimate of median household disposable income for 2018 is £28,400¹. The disposable income includes benefit payments and tax credits as well as wages or salaries and is what is left for family use after direct taxation including council tax has been taken out. The figure of £28,400 does not include housing costs. Those households living in relative poverty are living with disposable household income on or below £17,040 before any housing costs are taken into account. The cheapest area to rent privately is in the North East of England and the average rental costs there in July 2018, were £525 per month² amounting to £6,300 per annum.

Of course, families come in all shapes and sizes so what might be enough for one family could be very different for another family, therefore charities use different figures to differentiate between working and non-working families, single and two parent families and pensioner households.

It is not that life is not possible on a low-income level because it is. But it is not an easy or comfortable life and it is a life that excludes the family from much that the rest of us take for granted. I have just returned from the vet with a bill of £175 for a minor procedure on a beloved pet - almost a week's expenditure for a family on a limited budget income. If an unexpected bill comes in there is very little slack in such a budget to pay for it e.g. repair to a washing machine so no wonder 'pay day loan' companies find a ready market for their high interest loans.

We will be publishing further articles on poverty in future issues of the Messenger and we would love to hear from you on this subject.

The biggest event looking forward in March is Brexit scheduled for the 29th of this month. It has been the most divisive issue in our country for many years and people in our churches were and are on both sides of the debate. In terms of results, although there was a clear majority to leave, it was not a large majority with only 4% or 1,269,501 more people voting to leave than to remain.

So, there was no real consensus in the country about leaving or remaining and the decision to leave is still regretted by nearly half of those who voted. And amongst those who voted to leave there is no clear consensus about what kind of Brexit is desirable. Here in Northern Ireland there is the added worry about what happens to the border between

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and what that might mean for the constitutional future of Northern Ireland further down the line.

I am not sure that there can be an easy reconciliation on this issue between those who voted for leave and those who voted remain; between the different needs and desires of the regions of the United Kingdom; and between the age groups who voted in such different ways. The best hope is not to demonise those who differ from us personally over this matter; they just see issues differently; they voted with integrity taking due regard to things that matter to them; they, Remainers or Brexiteers are still our brothers and sisters in Christ and to be cherished as such. There is a wonderful Christian Aid Prayer praying for Palestinians and Israeli's that can be adapted:

**Pray not for Brexiteer or Remainer,
for World Trade rules supporter
or single market adherent,
pray rather for ourselves,
might not divide them in our
prayers
but keep them both together in
our hearts.**



Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

References

1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/bulletins/nowcastinghouseholdincomeintheuk/financialyearending2018>
2. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/752203/average-cost-of-rent-by-region-uk/>

Letter to the Editorial Team

Since 2011 and the start of the Moravian Church campaign to eliminate UK Child Poverty may I tell members my prayers have been answered.

The Rt Rev Sarah Groves is the first Provincial leader to take the time to give the above issue the genuine attention it rightly deserves. This Bishop should and must be commended.

Whatever type of Poverty be it Relative, Absolute or Abject she tells readers the devastating effects child poverty in the UK has on the sufferers' childhood, youth, adolescent and grown up lives.

The 2015 Ockbrook Conference on UKCP was a 'none mind changing' fellowship gathering.

Now is the opportune moment when Catherine West, MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, is planning to meet the PEC to discuss the 2016 and 2018 Resolution to take the first democratic step to eliminate UKCP that a new and more meaningful conference takes place.

*Yours still struggling,
Br Alan Holdsworth
Bath Coronation Avenue*



My weekend at the URC Youth Assembly

Over the past weekend (18th - 20th January), I attended the URC Youth Assembly in Staffordshire at the Whitemoor Lakes Activity Centre. Over the course of the weekend I took part in a number of workshops, activities and worships. The theme of this year's assembly was 'One body', the idea that we as part of the church are all important in some way. We explored this theme throughout the weekend.

When I arrived on Friday afternoon, I was greeted by a group of warm and welcoming synod representatives and group leaders including Ruben, who handed me my information pack and showed me to my room, where I met my lovely room-mate Emily from Newcastle Upon Tyne. It was also her first time at the assembly, so we were both slightly nervous. Soon the nerves went away when we met up in our small groups for worship and quizzes.

During this first session we competed in different quizzes including: One world, One voice and One mind. Unfortunately, after some issues involving a map and with geography not being our strong suit, we lost. Not only did this session spark conversation in our group, but also gave us a great insight into what was to come over the next two days.

After meeting in our small groups, we went into synod time. Not only was it the first time I met all these people, some who live fairly close to me, it was the first time I heard about all the youth groups, festivals and events that were happening right on my door step. The North Western synod representative was kind enough to invite me along to these events.

I had booked onto three workshops over the weekend, the first workshop was called 'Rubbish Ramble', which turned out to be really good, we walked around the grounds of the centre for an hour and picked up all the rubbish we could find. My group started to discuss how we had only been walking and picking for five minutes and our bags were half full and this led to a discussion on waste and packaging. This workshop was also a great tie into the worship given by the charity A Rocha UK (Caring for God's Earth).

The second workshop I attended was called 'Hostile environment' which I found really engaging as it's something I am really interested in. We read articles about how refugees are being treated in England, and how churches across the country are helping by running food drives and inviting refugees into the church for hot food and drink. I feel that the steps that the United Reformed Churches are taking are very positive. One of the themes of the assembly, 'One world', the idea that we must help one another in our world. Finally, I attended bible study, which was led by one of the key note speakers from the



© URC Youth Assembly

charity Beacon. In this session we tried to reinterpret how the re-wording of selected bible verses could be changed so as not to offend certain sections of the community.

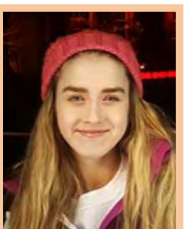
There were many interesting and inspiring key note speakers from the various charities represented. A Rocha UK was the first one we attended who gave us some alarming statistics about global warming, food production, mass migration, rising sea levels and greenhouse gas emissions. They then went on to tell us what A Rocha UK are doing as a charity with the involvement of churches, such as planting gardens and getting rid of using single use plastic containers. This topic then helped develop the 'One Body theme' of the Synod, because if just one church helps the environment by stopping the use of single plastic then imagine what several churches working together could achieve. I spoke to the A Rocha UK team over breakfast and they really inspired me to make more of an effort in my life to change the environment.

The next key note address was given by the charity Beacon who are helping LGBTQ+ youth, especially in the church. This has made me think about how we can become more tolerant to differences in the Moravian Church.

We then moved on to the voting process, over the weekend we debated on several issues. I found it really refreshing that we all had a voice and that everyone's opinion was listened to. The motions that were passed felt like great steps forward for the United Reformed Church. Some actions passed were for large projects such as to carry out a research project on how the church can help with youth mental illness. Whilst some smaller actions were passed to make the life of the church easier for everyone in it, such as installing Wi-Fi to churches around the country so as to aid communication between churches. Finally, a motion to make sure the youth voice in the church would be heard, such as sending a youth representative to elders/equivalent meetings to put forward ideas on how to improve the church.

In conclusion I would like to thank PYCC for giving me the chance to attend and take part in a really enjoyable experience that has shown me that I can get involved and make a difference in my church.

Sr Sydney Williams-Howe
Fairfield



Ockbrook School Trip to India



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In July this year we went to India on an expedition with Wilderness Expertise. Our first week was called the 'Project phase' and we spent it in Dehradun at the Moravian Institute there. Everyone was very friendly, and we had a wonderful time. Our main task was to turn an old boys' dormitory into a library and move all of the furniture up into the new renovated dormitory. The store room where the books were being kept also needed cleaning out, and we spent our afternoons tutoring the children in English and Maths and playing games, so there was plenty to do!

When we first arrived, we were welcomed by the school in a special assembly, where we explained what we were going to be doing during the week. We were lucky enough to meet the head teacher in England before flying out, so we had a good idea of the jobs that needed doing. We were also invited to join the school's evening

devotion, which was a lovely short meeting where the students would lead themselves in worship and then an alumnus of the school would come and talk about their journey in faith. We were hosted in the parsonage of the church, and both were separate from the school, so we travelled to and from the site on the school bus.



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The following morning, we got started on the task in hand. We began moving steel bunk beds from the old dorm into the new and setting them out in rows. The new dormitory was across a basketball court and up two flights of stairs from the old, so this was a pretty challenging job! There were also lockers and large cases to move, which left the room ready to turn into a library.

The bookcases in the store room were emptied, cleaned and moved up to the empty room, and their contents were put into large rice bags. These books then had to be sorted by genre and dusted when they got to the new library and returned to the bookcases. Each morning was more and more rewarding as we watched the transformation.

Every afternoon was spent with the younger children at the school, and each member of our team had one student to tutor. We taught English or Maths depending on what the students most needed help with, and then we introduced the whole class to some of our favourite games! All of the children were lovely, and their passion for learning was inspiring.

On Sunday morning at the end of our fun week at the school, we had the opportunity to join in the service at the church next to where we were staying. One of the members of our team even got to play the drums with the band! The service was very similar to one that we would recognise in the UK, and it was interesting to learn the Hindi versions of songs we already knew.

We would like to thank everyone at the Moravian Institute and the church in Dehradun for making us feel so at home and comfortable while we were staying there. We went on to have an amazing time trekking in the Himalayas for our second week and enjoying the wonders of India including the Taj Mahal in our third and final phase. Our entire experience was phenomenal, and the school project was no exception.

Abigail Evans
Ockbrook School

Unity Prayer Day *continues from the front page*

It was decided that the Unity Board should set up a schedule of the Provinces responsible for preparing the material for the 'Unity Prayer Day'. On the Unity Prayer Day, a so-called Unity Offering should be collected in all Congregations of the Unity. The purpose for which the money would be collected was to be fixed by the Unity Board annually. The first offering, which was taken in 1968, was for the Tibetan refugees in North India. The collected funds were to be spent on constructing a Hostel for 100 children.

The first Unity Offering to North India

Actually, at the Unity Synod 1967, it was decided that the work in North India, including both Ladakh and Rajpur, should be named an undertaking of the whole Unity. It was also decided that the British Province should administer the work in North India and collect funds from the Provinces. The status of North India being a Unity Undertaking has now changed. It is a Mission Area of the Worldwide Moravian Church, still under the supervision

of the British Province. The name was by decision of the Unity Synod 2002 changed from The Moravian Church in North India to the Moravian Church in South Asia, which not only includes Ladakh and Rajpur, but also Assam and the Moravian Church in Nepal. Currently, a process, which was directed by the Unity Synod 2002, is going on for the Moravian Church in South Asia. The goal is ultimately to see a Unity Province of South Asia develop.

The Unity Prayer Day Offering 2019

The Unity Prayer Day and the Unity Offering continues to be part of the work of the Worldwide Moravian Unity. It is now the task of the Unity Mission and Development Board to decide which part of the Unity is to benefit from the Unity Offering. The 2019 Unity Offering, 51 years after the first one was dedicated to the Hostel for Tibetan refugees' children in Ladakh, is once again to the benefit of a project in North India. This time the Unity Offering will be spent on a new church building in Haflong in Assam, India. The

main station for the work in Assam is Binnakandi with outstations in Latingkhal and Haflong. Haflong has a growing congregation. It is a hill station situated five hours drive north of Binnakandi. A bamboo church has been used for some years but is now in danger of sliding down the hill side. A new plot of land situated lower down on a more even piece of land has been purchased through the help of the Moravian Church in Binnakandi. The vision is to build a more permanent church. For this purpose the Unity Offering is taken this year and all provinces around the Unity are asked to collect funds for this purpose.

It is the hope that we as the Worldwide Moravian Church will be mindful of the importance of prayer and let this responsibility be visible on Sunday March 3rd, the Sunday closest to the 1st of March 2019.

Br Jørgen Bøytler
Unity Board
Administrator



Integrity of Creation



The World Council of Churches at its Vancouver assembly in 1983 urged member churches to engage in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. This was a response to a situation of crisis: arms race, worldwide injustice and severe mistreatment of our planet.

All three areas of crisis are major threats to life and are interconnected.

Our Moravian Church's Mission Statement contains all three elements. Here we shall emphasise the 'integrity of creation'. Point 5 of our Mission Statement states, 'we commit ourselves to safeguard the integrity of creation, sustaining and renewing the life of the earth'.

At Ockbrook we have embarked on an exploration of this statement. In June 2017 a seminar was held with the title 'Introduction to Creation Theology in the Bible', facilitated by Dr Margaret Barker and Dr Ann Hope. Theological and practical considerations came together and a series of ecumenical meetings followed. The Co-op in Borrowash did not only open their meeting room for our gatherings but they also provided a notice board for environmental issues and have generally been very supportive.

The meetings culminated in three public gatherings, held in the Methodist Church in Borrowash:

- 1. The problem of packaging** (with speakers from the Council and local businesses).
- 2. What happens to our local waste?** (with the Refuse Supervisor of Erewash Council).
- 3. Plastic pollution in seas and rivers** (with a local business person and an expert on water pollution).

Synod has commissioned our congregations to work further on the topic of integrity of creation.

Dr Margaret Barker is providing a series of articles that outline Creation Theology. They will be published in the months to come.

We are also working on practical advice that we intend to share.

Br Joachim Kreusel
Ockbrook

Creation Theology in the Bible

The Bible has no single passage that describes the theology of creation. We have to piece it together from many texts and from material outside the Bible which shows how the first Christians would have understood the creation and their place in it.

The temple in Jerusalem was built to represent the six days of creation. All the worship and teaching there centred on praising the Creator and caring for the creation. Adam and all human beings were created to be the high priests of the temple and to lead the worship. Any sins in the creation polluted the temple.

THE CREATION IS ONE SYSTEM HELD
TOGETHER BY LOVING KINDNESS.

BREAKING GOD'S LAWS DESTROYS THE
CREATION AND HUMAN SOCIETY

They believed that creation was held in one system by the LORD's eternal covenant, which had several names.

- The everlasting or eternal covenant: 'the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.' Genesis 9.16.
- The covenant of peace: 'My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed.' Isaiah 54.10.
- The covenant of steadfast love; this was the name used in the time of Jesus, for example in the Dead Sea Scrolls. 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' John 13.35.

The creation covenant bound all the natural order and human society into one system, and so human sin could destroy the creation. The creation covenant was imagined as a great net that kept all things secure. Adam the high priest had to give correct teachings so that there were no sins through ignorance; and he had to repair the covenant when it was broken. Jesus our great high priest (Hebrews 4.14), made this covenant new at the Last Supper, removing the sins that destroyed it (Matthew 26.28). Isaiah described the broken covenant (Isaiah 24.4-8), and the nightmare pictures in Revelation 6.12-14 are a vision of the covenant collapsing.

The covenant bonds were restored by atonement. The high priest ritually removed from the temple the pollutions caused by sin, and thus restored the covenant and healed the creation. He healed by sprinkling and pouring out blood, a symbol of his own life. This was called the sin offering (Isaiah 53.10). St Paul said that all Christians must offer themselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12.1-2), thinking differently, and so being a part of the healing atonement.

The music of the angels praises God and expresses the harmony of creation, but sin made it impossible to hear the song of the angels. The shepherds at Bethlehem heard the song again when the Saviour was born. St Paul taught that all the new children of God, led by the Spirit, should release creation from decay (Romans 8.12-25).

Dr Margaret Barker
Methodist Preacher and Theologian



Is the Qur'an Divine Revelation?

A Perspective from John Amos Comenius

Part **1**

With over 100 published titles to his name, John Amos Comenius was one of the more prolific authors of the seventeenth century. For example, his major publication on teaching a new language, *Janua Linguarum Reserata* (Gateway to Languages Unlocked), had over one hundred editions and was widely adopted in schools throughout Europe. His contribution in the field of educational philosophy is particularly noteworthy but his contribution to interfaith dialogue has only recently been discovered. He was born in Nivnice, Moravia, on 28 March 1592, orphaned at the age twelve and lost his extensive inheritance through the Bocskai invasion from Hungary. These factors may have influenced the unity-seeking approach for which he is renowned.

After his early education Comenius undertook preparation for the ordained ministry in Germany, which included a brief stay at Heidelberg. He began his pastoral work in the Moravian Church at the commencement of the Thirty Years War and soon realised that a new initiative was needed for the reformation of the era in which he was living. From 1616 onwards Comenius became involved in the economic and social crises that devastated his country. His approach to the crises was to raise Christian awareness to the problems and to propose solutions that gave priority to ensuring unity in the nation. "It was in his exposition on issues of unity in the Christian Church and the world community that he addressed issues relating to Islam.

His fundamental view was that if there is unity in God's creation, then it was imperative that Christians dialogue with others who have different claims about divine revelation. He said it would be foolish of us to dismiss beforehand any claim to revelation without first assessing it according to agreed criteria. Christians who believe divine revelation is confined to what is given in Jesus and expressed in the Bible, struggle with how to assess the claims to divine revelation that followers of Islam make. In this article we will look at the criteria Comenius developed to assessing claims to revelation which, for example, Muslims make about the Qur'an.

Revelation without Discrimination

An important issue for Christians today, as indeed it was for Comenius, is whether they can regard the Qur'an as revelation from God, in the same sense in which the texts of Bible are received as revealed. Coming to terms with the issue of revelation (what Muslims refer to as wahy) is particularly significant because despite decades of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the central issue of the acceptance by Christianity and Islam of each other as authentic revelations has not been settled.

Although Comenius regarded the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and all that flows for that as being pre-eminentⁱⁱⁱ he could not dismiss the claims of others before considering them. He argued that the revealed nature of the Qur'an should be looked at in terms of how God speaks to the human community.

^{iv}Comenius cautions anyone to dare to reject any one of these books as a hoax.^v For him, revelation is God's handiwork and it

would be perilous for anyone to wish to stand in God's way. For someone to immediately reject the claim that others have a revelation in a book from God, though different from our own, is to run the risk of refusing to listen to the voice of God. He said:

[Refusing to listen to what God is believed by others to have said] imposes blindness upon God. In other words, he imagines God as a blind, deaf, and dumb idol or a cruel tyrant who perhaps watches our downfall and destruction with a smile of indifference and certainly does not intervene as He might. Since no one could wish for such an absurd God, the idea would be unthinkable, and when one hears that books are being circulated in God's name, one would wish them to be truly divine so that we may listen to God. This is the first point on which we must agree, that some books must exist in which the voice of God himself is recorded, no matter how far we have to go to find them.^{vi}

It is for this reason that he gives all books claiming the status of a divine message from God the benefit of the doubt. However, since sacred scripture is the voice of God to human beings, and since there were several books claiming divine status, infallible criteria must be established to ensure against deception. He said, "we must first and foremost agree upon criteria or signs which may enable the divine books to be certainly and infallibly distinguished from others."^{vii}

In making the call for these criteria, Comenius steps beyond the polemic of his day and addressed himself to the wider interfaith context that we are facing today. However, one can see a tension in Comenius' attitude to books of possible divine origin. On the one hand, he wanted to guard against bestowing on some questionable book the honour that is due to God's word. On the other hand, however, he believed that we were to live in fear and trembling and be cautious about making pronouncements about any book that is believed by anyone to represent the voice of God. This tension, though, was unavoidable because he fundamentally believed that God reveals himself to all human beings and that everyone, by virtue of his/her make-up, is able to receive God's revelation.

Harmony is Revelation

In addition to the belief that God speaks to the individual, Comenius also believed that everyone, in all nations of the world, not only has a desire for truth but also has the capacity for finding it. In other words, the human being is able to receive and understand the revealed will of God. His argument for revelation without discrimination can be summarised as follows:

- (1) In addition to revelation in the human mind and the world of nature, God has given us important information and warnings for our salvation in sacred scripture.
- (2) If words of warnings (i.e. divine books) are forthcoming, other than have been received in the Christian sacred

writing, they must be tested against the agreed infallible criteria, to insure against deception and to show what is authentically God's word.

- (3) Everyone must accept as authoritative any statement proven to be from God.

From these three affirmations Comenius develops an approach to revelation that was aimed at giving a definitive answer to the question of whether divine revelation can be found in books outside Judeo-Christian revelation in the Bible. The relevance and worth of Comenius are not only that he takes the claims to revelation in the Qur'an as an important and relevant issue but also that he provides us with an approach to addressing it. This approach by Comenius, which we might call a hermeneutic of harmony, is dealt with in fuller detail in my book, *A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism*.

Let us remind ourselves why Comenius could not side-step this claim to revelation in the Qur'an: first, as a ground principle, he believed that God speaks to people: in written books, in the physical world and in the human mind. Secondly he believed that God couldn't contradict himself. Therefore, if there are several claims to revelation in divine books, then there must be a way to decide whether they are authentic. His task, then, was to find a basis on which all claims to revelation could be assessed for their authenticity. It is not enough to say that a claim to revelation is false. We have to say why it is false by using the same criteria that we use to conclude that another claim to revelation is true. In short, the claims to revelation in the Qur'an and in the Bible have to be assessed on the same basis. What basis can we use? This question is answered in Part 2.

Br Livingstone Thompson
Minister of University Road and
Kilwarlin Congregations, and PEC



ⁱ See in this regard, Livingstone Thompson, *A Protestant Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).

ⁱⁱ Comenius Consultation on human Affairs has the following component parts: (I) Panegesia - Universal Awakening; (II) Panaugia - Universal Light (or Universal Dawning); (III) Pansophia - Universal Wisdom; (IV) Pampaedia - Universal Education; (V) Panglottia - Universal Language; (VI) Panorthosia - Universal Reform (VII) Pannuthesia - Universal Warning. Parts I & II were published during Comenius' life-time but it was not until the 20th century that the remainder became known. There is as yet no English translation of parts III & VII.

ⁱⁱⁱ In Panaugia III, 24 he asserts: "Christianity is the only sound religion, and since it has been built upon the firmest rock, no true reasoning nor evidence of truly divine revelation can unsettle it. Other religions are built upon sand with the straw and stubble of human interventions or devilish illusions, and they are not strong enough to withstand the torrent of reasons."

^{iv} Panaugia, VII, 2.

^v Panaugia, VII, 8.

^{vi} Panaugia, VII, 8.

^{vii} Panaugia, VII, 9.



Sr Clarissa Johnson

Sr Clarissa (Clarister) Johnson died on 15th December 2018 following a period of ill health. Her funeral was held at New Beulah Moravian Church on 5th January. Clarissa was born into a Moravian family in the Nazareth Congregation in Jamaica. She came to England in 1969 and trained as a State Registered Nurse. Whilst working in Belfast she worshipped with the Cliftonville Congregation. Her career in nursing reached its peak when she became the Director of Nursing Services in Waltham Forest. Clarissa also became a Justice of the Peace and having suffered from racism herself during her time in England she was also active in community relations work. Clarissa was ordained in 1989 and served Hornsey Moravian Church and Stoke Newington Society until her retirement in 1998.

Following retirement, Clarissa returned to Mandeville in Jamaica - but not to a quiet life. She was soon fully involved in the work of the Jamaica Province, serving as co-minister of the large Mandeville congregation. She also travelled regularly climbing rough hill roads to lead worship at Nazareth and Huntley, where she had grown up. But her work was not limited to the Moravian Church. As chaplain at the Mandeville Hospital she helped to bring comfort and strength to many patients. Perhaps one of the things she will be best remembered for was setting up and supervising a centre for homeless men just outside Mandeville, not only providing shelter for the homeless but helping them to find work and a purpose in life. As always she brought vision and compassion, a deep concern for people to all she did.

Sr Clarissa (Clarister) Johnson - a tribute

From the members and friends of the Hornsey Moravian Church in London, UK.

Sr Clarissa was minister of the Hornsey congregation from 1989-1998 when she returned to her native island, Jamaica.

During her time at Hornsey she was the driving force behind a period of numerical growth and spiritual development in the congregation. Morale was high and a number of practical projects were undertaken. We remember especially the rebuilding of the pipe organ and the repainting of the church interior.

The social side of the congregation improved. For example, the residents of the local sheltered housing complex were invited to share in the congregation's Christmas lunch. This contact led to services being held once a month in the centre's common room.

An important part of the pastoral life of the congregation was the visiting the housebound in their homes and in hospital. Sr Clarissa encouraged a team of visitors to share in this ministry.

During this period Clarissa also served as a magistrate on the local bench thereby fulfilling her civic responsibility.

Sr Johnson knew and understood her congregation: the members' backgrounds, needs, challenges etc, and supported them both spiritually and practically. She was assiduous in visiting and comforting those who needed a listening ear.

Johnny was supportive and proud of his wife and her achievements. When she was Chief Nursing Officer for the Waltham Forest area in London, Clarissa would visit hospitals on Christmas

morning. Johnny observed that he felt rather like Prince Philip following the Queen around on official visits.

On a domestic level, she was reputedly the best brandy sauce maker for Christmas lunch - almost 100% proof! Those who ate the most were almost asleep over the board games after dinner!

Jasmine followed Clarissa in the National Health Service and they were very competitive with each other - she was an impressive role model and mentor.

We join with you, our brothers and sisters in Jamaica, in giving thanks for Clarissa, for her friendship and compassion. We can be confident that she has now entered the more immediate presence of her Lord and Saviour but for those of us who are left, she will be sorely missed.



© Br James Woolford

Service of Thanksgiving for the life and service of Sr Clarissa Johnson

On the 16th December 2018 the congregation at Hornsey met together for their morning service. During this service they received the sad news that Sr Clarissa Johnson had been Called Home. Sr Johnson served as minister at Hornsey for 10 years and prior to that she was a member of the congregation. Following this news, we decided to have a service of thanksgiving that would take place close to the funeral in Jamaica so that we could bring our own tributes, share our memories and give thanks for all that she did in her life and service of God. That service took place on the afternoon of the 6th January following our morning service. It was planned by myself, Sr Jackie Morten and Sr Rose Griffith who had known Sr Johnson for many years.

The church was almost full as people gathered for the service, which gives you a strong sense as to the impact Sr Johnson made in her time here. The readings for the service were Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 and Revelation 21:1-7 and there was a number of spoken and sung tributes delivered by members and friends of the congregation and of Sr Clarissa. These tributes

spoke to the caring and dedicated ministry that Sr Clarissa brought to the church and of her strong sense of service and love for the members. There were a few moments of laughter as well as we heard how her husband Johnny felt like the Duke of Edinburgh when he accompanied Sr Clarissa anywhere as she was the one people really wanted to speak to. Sr Clarissa's extra strong brandy sauce was also fondly remembered. We sang a number of Sr Clarissa's favourite hymns and finished the service with a rousing rendition of 'When we all get to Heaven'.

It was a privilege to be part of this service and to hear and see all that Sr Clarissa meant to all who knew her. I pray to God with a thankful heart for the life and service of Sr Clarissa and pray God in His mercy will give continuing comfort to those who mourn, and may we all be inspired by the service and dedication of Sr Clarissa Johnson who was called home to be with her God.

Br James Woolford
Minister at Hornsey Congregation

Hall Green

Ordination of Sr Lorraine Shorten

What a year 2018 was for Hall Green United Community Church in Birmingham. There was disruption for months as builders remodelled our buildings to make them fit for use in the 21st century. As always seems to happen, deadlines got missed, timetables were extended but we were just ready to open the doors to our local community on 13th October. Amazingly, over 400 visitors came to see what we had been doing and were inspired by our Community Day and everything that goes on here.

Talking of inspiration leads me to the high point of our year. On 3rd November we saw the ordination of our minister, Sr Lorraine Shorten. Visitors descended on us from all over the province and ensured a full church for this very special occasion. Ministers, in their surplices, processed down the aisle like a fluttering flock of white doves.

The service was led by Bishop John McOwat and the very thoughtful sermon was presented by Rev Dr Graham Adams, one of Sr Lorraine's tutors at Northern College.

For me, the highlight of the service was the obvious joy on Sr Lorraine's face as she received her surplice, an indication of the years of hard work and dedication she has already put in to her ministry.

Her challenge at Hall Green is a special one for a Moravian minister. To weld together the great traditions of her church with those of the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. It is a formidable task for anyone, especially for a newly ordained minister, but one she is tackling with



© Sr L Shorten

enthusiasm, love, passion, humour and faith.

One of the hymns in the ordination service was written specially by Jan Berry. The first two lines reflect our minister:

**'I lift my heart to praise you, God
With laughter and surprise.'**

Sr Lorraine continues to surprise us week after week and her ministry blesses us with laughter.

Br Blair Kessler

Horton

We held our Harvest Festival in September and the service was conducted by our minister Br David Howarth. The harvest produce was collected for the local Bradford Food Bank which we support not just at harvest but also at each Lovefeast and Holy Communion Service when we bring donations.

Our Social Committee have been really busy organising fundraising events for ourselves and outside projects such as a craft coffee morning where we knitted and crocheted squares that Sr Hollindrake made up into a blanket. We try to support the Gianna Project Charity which offers support and advice to women and girls during and after pregnancy. Some of the mums and children helped by the project came along and they were able to learn a new skill. It was great fun and we sent them home with needles and wool. The blanket was appreciated along with a small donation and we were also able to donate other items.

We also held a Casserole Lunch, which was basically different types of fillings in giant Yorkshire puddings - what else would it be in Yorkshire!

On Advent Sunday evening we were hosts to the Yorkshire Singers and it was lovely to see a full church appreciate the singers. Their hard work rehearsing over the previous months certainly paid off. Well done everyone.

We thank all the visiting preachers including our own

members: Sr Liz Wood who has taken a number of services lately and Sr Maureen Colbert for leading us in a Café Church. As a congregation we all try and do our bit in readings, sketches and sometimes members use their craft talents in knitting blankets and hand-made gifts to support various charities.

Our Christmas offertory this year has gone to the Nick Smith Foundation which is a local charity supporting research into Motor Neurone Disease (which Nick had when he died at only 38) it also supports help for bereaved children as Nick's children were only three and five when he died.

We also had a Moses basket placed along with the Christmas Tree and Crib in the baptistry. Our members then filled the basket with things a new born baby would need and we passed them on to the Gianna Project at the beginning of January. This gift giving is very poignant at this time of year, particularly in that setting.

Christmas services took place as usual and advent candles were lit and figures put into the crib. This has been a tradition at Horton for many years. The advent star went up and so did our Christmas tree and we are blessed with members who do this work each year as part of the work for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Br Jamie Spencer

Brockweir

*O come, you Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by your advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight.*

The contrast between light and dark, hope and despair always seems more marked during the season of advent. It is, like lent, a time of preparation and anticipation, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. Amidst the joy of new life however, is the ever present reminder of the Easter story with the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Advent is a busy time within our church life but added to that, villagers transform Brockweir into a giant advent calendar, marshalled with the help of Sr Mary Harris.

Each night in December a window is revealed to an excited crowd with a Christmas or biblical scene. Hot mulled wine, mince pies and sausage rolls are served, as we view each other's efforts with delight. It is a fun thing to do in itself but it also has a more important role as it brings together the most unlikely group of villagers. Many people, if honest, think that church life is



© Br P Ashton

not for them; they will socialise at Soup Lunch, attend coffee mornings and support us at a comfortable distance. Meeting people each night though, allows us to 'walk with them', mourn with them if they are mourning; provide a friendly smile if they are lonely and give some meaning to Christmas by providing a beacon of fellowship and hope.

Our Nativity Walk was popular once more with over 80 people in attendance including 25 children. The children, in particular, had a great time and reminded me of the Baker Street Irregulars as food and sweets disappeared in record time. Sr Patsy Holdsworth led the Christingle service and Sr Sue Groves took the service on Christmas Day which is always a joyful occasion.

As the first snowdrops and daffodils are appearing in the verges can Spring be far away?

Sr Judith Ashton

Lower Wyke

2018 was another busy year at Lower Wyke. The congregation are getting older but the activities show no sign of lessening or slowing down. Sr Dixon continues to inspire us with her services Sunday by Sunday and we have welcomed Srs Hopcroft, Woolford and Cooper and Brn Howarth, Kernohan, Evans and Hopcroft to conduct special services and fill the pulpit in the absence of Sr Dixon. The monthly Café Church is always a well attended service, some of the themes having been YPMA, discipleship, Spring, homelessness, promises, Father's Day, Summer Camp past and present and Toy Service.

The Art Exhibition in May is always a good time to meet up with friends, enjoy refreshments and appreciate the talent of local artists.

Our regular annual Summer events, benefiting from the beautiful weather, were all extremely successful. The Scarecrow Festival, once more wonderfully supported by the local schools and community, transformed the quiet hamlet as happy family groups excitedly commented on the vast array of scarecrows ranging from nursery rhyme characters to cultural figures such as the winning entry Van Gogh!!

Many of the same families returned to test their skill on a selection of outdoor games at the Strawberry Fair and to share in the delicious afternoon teas served alongside bowls of fresh strawberries and cream.

Proms in the Paddock has been held for ten years and in 2018 all attending enjoyed the warmth of a true summer evening whilst listening to the band and soloist Michelle Walker. There cannot be a better setting for the flag waving finale even in London!!

'Bacon Butties' and an interest in books combined to attract a room full of people in October and the Craft Fair in November was another chance to meet up with friends old and new. A record number of hot meals were served and, of course, there was the opportunity to buy gifts, stocking fillers and home made items in readiness for Christmas.

The Wyke food bank is extremely well supported by the congregation who generously give food, time and talents and several members are involved with other ecumenical activities including monthly prayer meetings.

As Christmas approached the Community Lunch celebrated with a special lunch and Greenfingers once more hosted a workshop, this year, making Christmas table centre pieces. The results were worthy of adorning any royal Christmas table!! The Belleplates played at the Christmas Gathering when hot pork sandwiches, cake, mince pies and mulled wine were enjoyed with a background of festive fun and carol singing.

As in most of our churches the Christingle Service was the highlight of the Christmas celebrations. A packed church shared in prayers and carols as the young people acted the nativity story. The entry of the trays of lit Christingles into a darkened church is always a special moment. This year, Lucy Thornton aged twelve, played Silent Night as a solo on her grandfather's cornet and the congregation joined in - something her grandfather did in years gone by.

As we start 2019 we hope that peace, good health and happiness will travel with you all from all at Lower Wyke.

Sr Diane Thornton

Baildon

'Many hands make light work'? Wendy Huggan, Maggie Wainwright and Steph Wright form a production line to make red carnations for The World Day of Prayer Service on March 1st which this year has been written by the women of Slovenia. Red carnations are their national flower and they have asked that every member of the congregation receive one ... a bit pricey here in March hence the use of red paper serviettes green pipe cleaners!



© Sr Libbey Mitchell

Sr Libbey Mitchell

Bedford Queen's Park

We had a carol service on Wednesday 12th December supported by Three Rivers Baptist Church. Then on 13th January, 38 attended the joint lovefeast and Holy Communion. One of our former members of Queens Park came to the service to see how we were getting on and will come back. We also have a regular visitor who lives in a hostel near the church. We have a provisional start date for our new kitchen upgrade of 29th January. It is expected to take three to four weeks to complete.

Ecumenically, All Saint's Parish Church, Queens Park has a new vicar: Rev Paul Davies.

Br Eric Moore

Summer Camp Appeal

Many of you will have fond memories of Summer Camp and the friendships you will have made during the week away from home. For any who didn't make it to Summer Camp, a quick summary is that it is a place where young people come together from across the Province, to be a big Moravian family for one week during the summer break. During that week those who attend experience fellowship via games, Bible study, sharing of food, song and laughter. There are some trips out too!

As a PYCC we have always tried to keep the costs as low as possible so that it can be affordable for all who want to come. Yet, over the last few years, prices for accommodation, food and even the trips out that we keep as low cost as possible have all increased. We are aware that the price for Summer Camp is not as low as we would like it to be. However, as costs for everything cannot be cut further, we have had to begin to think more creatively. We know that all congregations in the Province give generously to the Church and multiple other charities every year. However, we are asking if some of you would consider perhaps doing some creative fundraising over the next year, so that we can reduce the price for Summer Camp 2020? I know there will be some amazing ideas out there and every penny really helps. Another alternative we ask you to consider is whether you would like to give a one off donation or perhaps a monthly donation (no amount is too small) specifically to Summer Camp. If this is something you feel able to do, please send a direct debit or regular bank transfer using the reference Summer Camp to Moravian Union Inc, Sort Code: 40-52-40 and Account Number: 00023436.

Thank you on behalf of PYCC and the young people who will benefit so much from attending Summer Camp.

Sr Lol Wood

From Church House

Provincial Diary for March

- 2 Mission & Society Committee (Roberta Hoey)
- 9 PYCC (Zoe Taylor & Roberta Hoey)
- 9 Lancashire District Conference (David Howarth)
- 9 Irish District Conference (Livingstone Thompson)
- 14-15 PEC
- 16 Sr Jane Dixon's Consecration, Lower Wyke
- 23 Midlands District Conference (Zoe Taylor)
- 29 Mar-1 April European Youth Leader's Conference (PYCO)

Congregational Register

Baptisms

13th Jan 2019 Sr Abigail Margaret Ann Bodie Gracehill

Deaths

10th Dec 2018 Sr Dorothy Hattersley Fairfield
23rd Dec 2018 Sr Mary Miller Gracehill
20th Jan 2019 Br Peter Kersting Fulneck

1	Founding of the Brethren's Church in 1457
	St David's Day
	World Day of Prayer (www.wwdp.org.uk)
3	Unity Prayer Day
	Church Action on Poverty Sunday (http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday)
5	Shrove Tuesday
6	Ash Wednesday
8	International Women's Day (www.internationalwomensday.com)
17	St Patrick's Day
20	Spring Equinox
21	Purim - Jewish
	Holi - Hindu
25	UN International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade (www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/)
31	Mothering Sunday
	Summer time begins

Dates to remember!

From the Sanctuary

My most favourite plants in the garden are snowdrops. I have spent years stocking the garden with them when I can find them. They are particularly difficult to buy. No one seems to stock them; but over the years, I have found them here and there to buy - not to dig up from the verges (although I have been tempted)! Sometimes, students and friends have given me some. I have also found a garden centre nearby that occasionally stocks them, but they soon sell-out and are popular with others too. So, it is a matter of keeping looking, and of being there when they have them. A place I love to visit at this time of year is Rode Hall, on the Staffordshire/Cheshire border, which has snowdrop walks through masses and masses of snowdrops which are growing wild. This year, my snowdrops have looked especially magnificent in the garden, so much so that I haven't needed my Rode Hall fix. They have spread and filled the garden in the way that I had hoped they eventually would do. My anticipation and vision have been fulfilled, and I can now really enjoy them and feel a deep gratitude for them and be in among them.

We are now into Lent. Like Advent (which doesn't seem that long ago), Lent is supposed to be a time in the Christian calendar which is characterised as a period of spiritual anticipation, discernment and preparation. In a way, it is a time of

metaphorically planting spiritual snowdrops in readiness for the growth and spiritual fruition of what we plant. Lent is a time of reflection - a time of prayer and study, and of asking what God is wanting of us. How can I bring my life more in touch with the aliveness of God's Holy Spirit, and grow in such a way to reflect more of the Glory and Grace of God? How can I adjust my life so that I can sit more with the love and blessing of God's comforting presence? It is difficult to achieve with a working life and a hectic family life - but stopping for a while to just be among the snowdrops, with a spirit of gratitude and sense of blessedness, is one way of being more with God. May you find your snowdrop moments throughout Lent.

Br Peter Gubi,
Dukinfield



SUMMER CAMP 2019

When: **3-10th August 2019**

Where: **Dovedale House, Ilam**

For: **Young people aged 10-17 with
links to the Moravian Church**

Cost: **£340**

More information and booking forms can be obtained from your minister or Joy Raynor at: youth@moravian.org

Information about the venue can be found at www.dovedalehouse.org

Booking before 31st May is recommended as we need to have a minimum number for camp to happen.

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