

moravian messenger

MARCH 2022



Rewilding God's Acre

Woodford Halse Moravian Burial Ground

With fewer natural habitats left in the world, conservationists are now looking for green spaces within urban areas and intensive agricultural land to lead the way in protecting wildlife. Green spaces such as parks, gardens, and roadside verges, are now being transformed into biodiversity hotspots in several ways - planting of native flowers, plants and trees and providing safe spaces for animals such as, insect hotels, hedgehog houses and bird and bat boxes. The public are being encouraged to rewild their gardens with new incentives such as 'No Mow May' (PlantLife.org.uk). Whilst a lot of attention has been placed on these spaces, only recently have conservationists started paying attention to burial grounds. Very little information is available on the biodiversity potential of burial grounds but one thing that scientists are sure of is that they could play a very important role in conservation.

Due to the protected status of most burial grounds and their importance in religious and cultural traditions, these sites have remained relatively untouched for potentially hundreds of years. Burial grounds now occupy a huge amount of green space within urban areas and may already be host to rare plants and animals that have survived in these urban oases for centuries. The Moravian Church in the UK owns numerous burial grounds with some in use and some no longer in use. These sites have

the potential to play a vital role in conservation efforts and to combat climate change as well. Plans have been implemented in some Moravian burial grounds to increase their suitability for native animals and plants.

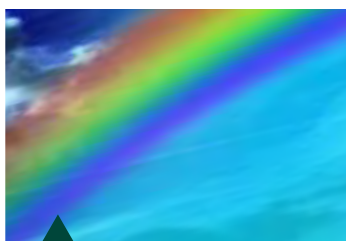
My study was inspired by one burial ground, Woodford Halse in Daventry. It is no longer in use and huge efforts to rewild the space are underway. The management of the site has been changed to prioritise conservation efforts whilst continuing to respect the religious traditions and people who on occasion will visit the graves of their relatives. The burial ground in Woodford Halse is the perfect example of how these sites can drive positive change and make a difference to the abundance of native animals whilst maintaining the traditional standards of the burial ground. Those that know of Woodford Halse may suggest that there is plenty of green space surrounding it already, so surely the wildlife in that area is doing fine. However, farmland acts as a desert for animals and plants. Green fields are dominated by one or two crop species which tend to be non-native and cannot support insects and other native animals. Crops and fields for livestock take up large quantities of land which lead to them being one of the main causes of habitat and species loss in the world.

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Editorial

This month we celebrate the founding of the Moravian Church in 1457: 565 years ago. We are so grateful for all that we have inherited from this ancient Church. In June of this year, we will also celebrate the renewal of the Church when religious refugees from Moravia and Bohemia, in present day Czechia, found a safe place to rebuild their lives in a village that became known as Herrnhut. The first tree was felled for the first home in 1722, 300 years ago.

We do have a wonderful past as a denomination but our task as Christians today is not to glorify it but to learn from it.

The first lesson is that our Church, as are all Churches, is only ever one generation away from extinction. Unless the faith is passed on to our children and grandchildren, to our friends and neighbours, to our colleagues and our communities it will die. We cannot keep to ourselves the faith that God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reaches down to us to seek us, forgives us through the death of Jesus on the cross, and brings us home. It is our love and strength for living and our hope in dying. Yet we keep it so close to us and we find it so difficult to share it. This faith is strengthened as we share it.

The second lesson is that the renewal of our Church came by the movement of refugees from a place of persecution to a place of safety. They were given permission to stay in a new country and establish their new community. We all understand that borders were not quite the same 300 years ago as they are now, but the principle is clear. The Christian faith is formed through the story of wandering and movement from its very beginning with the patriarchs Abraham and Sarah. It would be

wonderful if in this special anniversary year we could support refugees in a very tangible way. The Unity Prayer Day Offering, helping the Moravian Church in the USA (Northern and Southern Provinces) support refugees from Afghanistan is a very practical example of that.

A third lesson might be called the need to have a purpose. The most recent statement of the basis of faith of the Moravian Church (The Ground of the Unity) makes it clear that we are to open our heart and hand to people in their need. The British Province of the Moravian Church has, over two Synods, resolved to work towards ending child poverty in this country. The parliamentary petition we had submitted was rejected by the parliamentary authorities because it was too similar to other petitions. So, we are now asked to support a very similar petition. It would be wonderful if the whole body of the British Province could get behind this petition and help it get to 100,000 signatures. It is called 'Create and implement a strategy for eradicating child poverty' and can be found on the Parliamentary Petitions website <http://petition.parliament.uk>.

So as an anniversary challenge we can look back and give thanks; be faithful and share the faith; honour our past by supporting refugees now; and serve one of the most helpless groups in our society by continuing to care for the plight of children living and growing up in poverty.

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team



Create and implement a strategy for eradicating child poverty - Petitions (parliament.uk)

We want the Government to create and implement a specific Child Poverty Policy that has clear aims to eradicate child poverty. It should contain targets and strategies along the lines of previous strategies but aimed at eradicating - rather than limiting

- child poverty. 4.3 million children (31%) are living in poverty in the UK. The 2010 Child Poverty Act was established, setting targets to reduce child poverty. The Government's Social Mobility Commission has predicted that child

poverty rates will rise to 5.2 million by 2022. The 2016 Welfare Reform and Work Act abolished most of the 2010 Child Poverty Act. Since then, there has not been a specific Child Poverty Policy. We want a specific Child Poverty Policy to end child poverty in the UK.

A Moravian Summer

This year there are a range of events for Moravians of all ages, and from all parts of the Province - here are some of them:

March 26th 10.30-11.15am Moravian Families Online 'Acts of Hope' with BYO Lovefeast - details from youth@moravian.org.uk.

April 9th 5-7pm MyForum Zoom meeting for young people ages 14-25 - open to anyone to meet up for fellowship and to talk about the Church.

April 11th 3.30-4.15pm Moravian Families Online 'Acts of Hope 2' with BYO Lovefeast details from youth@moravian.org.uk.

April 30th MWA day online - information will be sent to MWA groups.

May 20th Pilgrimage Weekend at Ockbrook - contact paul.holdsworth@moravian.org.uk.

May 27th-28th Summer camp

day/overnight taster days, one in Northern England, one in the South of England (possibly Church House). NI event TBA - contact Joy Raynor youth@moravian.org.uk More information to follow.

June 23rd-27th 13th European Women's Conference - Woltersdorf Conference Centre, Berlin, Germany - contact jane.carter@moravian.org.uk for more information. There are still 10 UK places available.

June 25th Men's Fellowship Day - contact edwin.quildan@moravian.org.uk

July 14th-18th Provincial Synod at Swanwick Christian Conference Centre.

August 1st-5th Summer Camp for ages 10-17 at Beverley Youth Hostel - contact Joy Raynor youth@moravian.org.uk.

August 10th-25th Unity Heritage Youth Tour, Tanzania - delegates selected and approved by PEC.

August 17th-21st MOMO Festival in Herrnhut for ages 18-26 - contact Joy Raynor youth@moravian.org.uk.

August 25th-29th Greenbelt Festival for all ages but especially for ages 18-39 contact - Alishbha Khan: alishbha.khan@hotmail.co.uk, Rev Claire Maxwell claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk, Rev James Woolford james.woolford@moravian.org.uk.

September 19th-25th Pilgrimage to German Moravian Churches including Herrnhut - contact paul.holdsworth@moravian.org.uk

Sr Joy Raynor

Provincial Youth and Children's Officer

Art in Our Time October 2021 at Fetter Lane Moravian Close

The Pioneer Team had planned a creative week of ministry set to begin October half term 2020 and just like most of life in 2020 things paused. However, our vision was not lost and with funding behind us from the Moravian Church for Pioneer Ministry and a two thousand pounds generous grant from the Royal Borough of Chelsea and Kensington we planned ahead as a team for the event to be rolled out in what we hoped would be a better 2021.

Our Art Week which we named 'Art in Our Time' aimed to bring people together from both sides of our street, the King's Road, where some of the richest folks live opposite social housing. We also hoped it would provide a place where people could come together and process through prayer, laughter, reflection and artistry all that has passed in the last eighteen months (and ongoing) with COVID. Sharing together our stories and experiences, and taking time together and, in quiet moments, apart to process all that has gone on and been felt.

Where is God in that, you may wonder? Pioneer Ministry is rarely as explicit as 'quoting Bible verses at you', although we did wonder about them when it came to several of our workshops. Indeed, this Pioneer Ministry is more about gently discerning where God is in our lives, perhaps in unexpected or unexplored ways. This week intended to gently wonder.

We had one hundred and eleven people across all events attending, not including people who formed part of the Pioneer Team or those who facilitated workshops. Practically, we have contact details formed for future events and people have connected with us who have never been into our space before. It gave us a chance to speak and engage with the financially rich and the more financially modest. It may seem strange to emphasise this latter point but one observation over the last three years living here is how little this happens. It was, therefore, incredibly meaningful to have a family attend from one of our known richest roads alongside a family from our local estate. The importance of this mixing is vital for the healthiness of our areas and for us to work within the vision that God is for all to experience. As we wondered around God's plan and sense of Creation in the Family Land Art workshop it felt like a moment of God being present in this because this is so rare.



This book is an illustrated account of ten journeys undertaken by Br John McOwat to India and Nepal as a representative of the British Mission Board (BMB) on behalf of the worldwide Unity between 1995 and 2009. He was accompanied sometimes by his wife Beth and occasionally by Br Robert Hopcroft, the BMB member at the time.

India and Nepal - Book Review

Based primarily on his own personal diary notes, the book not only captures the spirit and details about the visitations, but it also records aspects of the growth and development of the Moravian Church in South Asia: consecrations, dedications, negotiations, along with stories of the hectic and unpredictable travel schedules, and was moved by the warmth of the spirit and hospitality on these trips. Written in a diary entry style, interspersed with occasional reports, over

14 years you can follow the day-to-day adventures, work, prayers and fulfilment of plans.

'India and Nepal' written by Br John McOwat is available at Church House and can be obtained with a donation of £10 (plus P & P) with all proceeds going towards the ongoing work of the Moravian Church in South Asia. To order your copy, please contact the Bookroom via email at office@moravian.org.uk or by telephone at 020 8883 3409.



Circus Skills workshop provided a time of laughter and lightness

My personal favourite session was done by a Storyteller called David Allen who carefully weaved together a story that celebrated all those

local, on the ground type heroes who have worked and supported our community throughout COVID. He got the group that gathered actively participating, adults as well as children, taking on drama roles as we thought about and appreciated: cleaners, teachers, nurses, bus drivers, neighbours, delivery drivers - to name but a few. We ended in prayer and it felt like a Spirit-filled moment.

Some written feedback we received from the week included these quotes:

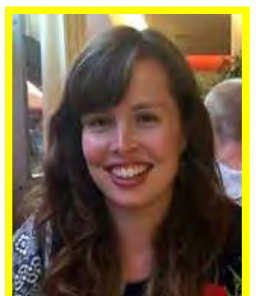
- 'Great, had a lovely time' - a family who attended our Family Art Therapy Session.
- 'Meaningful' - Adult Art Therapy Session.
- 'If church was like this, I would attend weekly' - this came from a self-declared non church going family who attended our Muddy Church session.
- 'It was well organised and enjoyable' - World's End Under 5's Session.

We have learnt lessons in terms of team availability, and we hope to do a smaller festival in the Spring again working with the local community where possible to connect us all more with God, life in this community and the joy of discovering the Spirit of God together. We have also recognised that for now our focus continues to be Art Based but that for the next year at least we are going to be concentrating on families.

Watch this space...

Sr Claire Maxwell

Minister at Fetter Lane





Deadwood area at Fetter Lane Moravian Burial Ground

Rewilding God's Acre *continued*

One other burial ground also starting to change their land management strategy for the better is Fetter Lane in Chelsea, London. The Fetter Lane congregation is still active, and the burial ground is well used by members of the congregation, residents, visitors, maintenance workers and vehicles. This site could be considered an opposite to Woodford Halse, however both sites share the same goal. The Fetter Lane burial ground now has a vital dead wood area which is important in encouraging many rare animals including the critically endangered Stag Beetle, as well as very important specialist insects such as hoverflies and the more common Lesser Stag Beetle. The planting of more native plants and the decrease in the amount of mowing will help increase the number of animals found at the site.

The foundation of life starts with insects: insects and other invertebrates have been around for over 400 million years, much longer than many other animals, including us! Insects have evolved close relationships with plants and many other insects are more effective pollinators than bees! They are also food for many small mammals, reptiles, bats, and birds. Therefore, the first step in trying to encourage native animals back to an area is to increase the number of insects found there. Consequently, as an entomologist I knew it was vital to study the insects within burial grounds as a first step towards understanding how useful burial grounds could be for British wildlife.

Over the months of May until August last year I visited both sites once a week and used a humane moth trap to collect and count the number and variety of moth species found at each site.

Moths are used in many scientific studies as indicator species, this means that we

can track changes in moth numbers and relate them to changes in the environment. I chose moths for this very reason. As well as their sensitivity to environmental and climate changes, moths are food for many rare birds, bats, and other animals, therefore a decline in moths in an area will most likely correlate with a decline in many other animals we know and love.

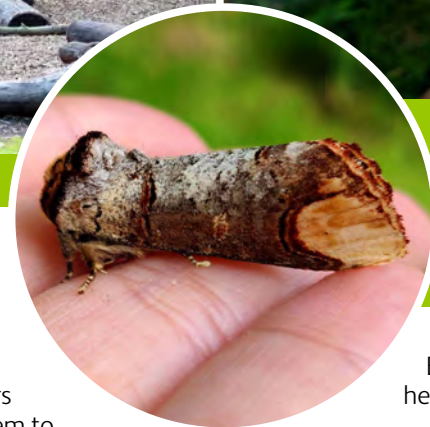
The moths were photographed, counted, and then released. I identified each moth and collected the data for analysis. I expected to see a higher number of moths and more variety of species at Woodford Halse, as the site is a lot 'wilder' with long grasses, and a beautiful variety of wildflowers to encourage more insects than the Chelsea site. Whilst conducting my study I began to notice a huge difference in the numbers of moths found at the two sites, and as I guessed the more natural site did yield a significantly larger number of species than the 'neater' and more manicured Fetter Lane site.

My study showed that the decrease in mowing alongside the increase in the number of wild plant species at Woodford Halse was a success and the site has increased its conservation potential. Woodford Halse is an Eden tucked away in a small Northamptonshire village. Whilst visiting in the summer I could not believe the amount of life in one small space, everywhere you look is teeming with beautiful creatures. Butterflies and moths fluttering between the flowers, bumble bees, miner bees and wild honeybees buzzing around busily, beetles munching away at the leaves and bits of bark, hoverflies scanning the area and

so much more. As an Entomologist I truly was in heaven!

This is not to say that the efforts at Fetter Lane go unnoticed, the site is being mown less and there are more wildflowers being grown and the results are already visible. On my visits to Fetter Lane I was glad to see an abundance of insects, birds and even bats in the grounds making it hard to believe that the busy concrete jungle of the Kings Road was just behind the walls. Both sites truly were little pockets of bountiful life in the middle of man-made deserts. Whilst many 'traditional' thinkers may think that a wildflower meadow is an 'overgrown mess', I urge them to look again and look closer as there is a whole micro world in there. Insects busy working and growing in preparation for the healing and nurturing they will do for our native animals and plants, as well as for ourselves. Both Woodford Halse and Fetter Lane are doing fantastic work to aid in preserving British wildlife and to lessen the impacts of climate change and as the study shows their efforts are really paying off! I hope that not only other Moravian burial grounds can learn and change from them but also other religious burial grounds and green spaces. You can even help at home by growing your own wildflower meadow, mowing less often, and adding insect hotels, wildlife ponds and so much more!

Imogen Newens-Hill
Entomologist



Buff-tip moth, disguised to resemble a birch tree twig



Privet Hawk moth, the largest Hawk moth in the UK

What I Believe

Moravian Messenger Editor, Sr Sarah Groves interviews Sr Jackie Morten

Sr Morten is a member of Hornsey Moravian Church and was elected to the Provincial Elder's Conference (often called the Provincial Board) in 1994. She served as Chair of PEC from 2000 to 2010 and retired from the PEC in 2010.

My parents had met through the badminton club at Hornsey Moravian Church, and I was born on Palm Sunday 1952 in a snowstorm. I am told that the midwife could not get through the snow on her bicycle and dad got his first taste of fatherhood up close and personal! Four further babies arrived in due course, but he wasn't called upon to hone his midwifery skills again.

How and when did you come to faith?

I grew up attending the Moravian Church with its Sunday School, guides and scouts, youth club - something for almost every day of the week. When I was old enough, there was Summer School at Ockbrook with its annual 'mystery tour' to Matlock. On reflection, I think that this was one of the most positive and long-lasting influences on my journey of faith. I can still look around the Province and see people, also still in membership, who I remember from the 1960s.

Have you ever had a crisis of faith or a gnawing doubt about your faith?

Faith came gradually and I can't really remember a time when I changed from thinking that faith was a 'maybe' to a 'definitely' but I am glad that I did. There have been times when I have disagreed with the Almighty and his timing but have never doubted his presence and his love.

What different roles have you undertaken in the Church?

My first 'adult role' in the church was as congregation treasurer - back in the days of manual entry ledgers - remember those? I am once again, the Hornsey Treasurer but this time with a spreadsheet or two to help me out. We have also found a brilliant Independent Examiner to go through my efforts and verify them.

How did you hear God's call in your election to the Provincial Elders Conference?

I was not prepared for the events at Synod in 1994 that resulted in my being elected as a part-time member of PEC and it took quite some time to understand and to accept, strangely, that this was God's will and that I had to go with the flow, knuckle down and get on with it. Here I would pay tribute to Brn McOwat and Birtill for welcoming two newbies (I include Br Derrick Woods as my fellow part-timer here) and making us feel part of PEC right from our first meeting.

Although I had led worship occasionally at Hornsey, I wasn't a lay preacher and it became clear that the member of PEC attending congregations for whatever reason, was often

expected to be the guest preacher on the Sunday. Eventually I asked the PEC whether I could take a few modules at the local training college in order to give me a bit of depth of understanding and this was invaluable, not least to my confidence.

What has been your greatest joy in the Church?

It was always a great privilege to visit other provinces of the Unity and I was the link person for our partners, Moravian Church in Western Tanzania. It was always humbling to visit Tanzania and see the energy and dedication of people with so little materially and yet with such a thirst for the Gospel message.

Why are so many people turning their backs on organised religion?

The pandemic with its lockdowns has highlighted and probably speeded up the current trend of voting with one's feet when it comes to church attendance. Many

congregations presently use Zoom for meetings and for worship. This allows people to remain in their own homes and yet take part in Bible study and prayer meetings but only if they are able to access the internet or have a smartphone. YouTube services are also invaluable, but it is in no way a replacement for participating in a live real-time worship service.

What direction should our Church take today?

Today's society is all about the individual with very little emphasis on community and caring for others. Yet, this is what is at the heart of our faith where, to quote Count Zinzendorf 'there can be no Christianity without community'. Perhaps we too need to shift our focus to be more inclusive.

Some personal preferences-favourite film, book, music and why?

I don't enjoy films particularly, but I do enjoy music and generally have Scala Radio playing in the background. I love reading and always have a book on the go - nothing erudite but simply a good read. Often a good murder mystery but just as likely to be a Harry Potter - I've even got the earlier (shorter) books in the series in French - I now have quite an eclectic vocabulary!

The place where you feel closest to God?

It would be hard to beat Iona as a place where one can feel God's presence so, although it's a favourite, it is too far away to be a regular haunt. Far more accessible are the many local open spaces where one can observe the pattern of the seasons and the cycle of life and sense God's presence there.

What inscription on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

I'm not intending to be at my funeral as I'm sure I'll be too busy enjoying what life in the hereafter is all about. No epitaph either. To paraphrase Count Zinzendorf: live the Gospel, die, be forgotten. Sounds about right to me.



© Sr Jackie Morten

Being the Church in and after COVID: Challenges and Opportunities

In this article, I will use the Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth's model to structure the content. This model states that when congregations face trauma, they go through five phases: Impact; Heroic; Disillusionment; Reconstruction; and Wiser Living. I write from a personal basis and do not reflect the views of the Provincial Board.

Before I address the journey of the Moravian Church in the British Province in, and after, COVID, it is important to acknowledge that the COVID pandemic is not the first time that the Church has faced an existential crisis - and it is still here, and will continue to be here, in some form or another, if not in its current form. If you know your biblical history, you will know that in the Old Testament the Jews faced existential challenges through oppression by the Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Romans (among others) - and, each time, they have come through *by following strong leadership, by journeying with circumstances, and by adapting* - whilst never losing a sense of their identity and of their part in the purpose of God. Their journey has been described as a process of orientation, disorientation, and re-orientation. The same process happened for the early Christians, in that they were persecuted before being able to re-orientate once again, and even the early Czech-based Moravian Church was nearly wiped out in the 30 years' war, before being renewed in Herrnhut. So, this article is not intended to be pessimistic - but it is realistic. I believe that realism, rather than burying our head in the sand, is what we need to confront, in order to re-orientate wisely.

So, turning to the Church in COVID, and looking at the **Impact phase**: if we think that Church, first and foremost, is about relationship and community in which the worship of God is central to our purpose, the COVID pandemic caused us to rethink what it means to worship, and what it means to be community. At a time when we could no longer gather together because of lockdown, could God still be present when two are three are gathered together in His name, even if it is over Zoom? The pandemic threw up all kinds of theological questions, such as 'why has God allowed this to happen?', made many of us more aware of our mortality, and even made us question the theological precepts of Holy Communion. Some of us (myself included) lost folks who were close to us. So, whether we acknowledge it or not, COVID has impacted us as a Church.

In responding to the need for continued worship and pastoral support, we entered what might be considered to be a **Heroic phase**, in which various congregations and Ministers heroically tried to plug gaps in worship and community through the provision of Zoom services, Worship on the Web, regular weekly (and sometimes daily) telephone conversations which were pastorally designed to combat potential isolation, Zoom Bible Studies, Zoom prayer meetings, a Zoom Synod in which voting could be conducted electronically, and even a drive-in Christingle service. This involved learning new computer skills and adapting to worshipping and operating in a different context. That provision showed us that we, as a Church which can be described as 'traditional', could pragmatically adapt on a 'needs must'

basis. It also enabled creative innovation and enabled the Church to expand beyond the frontiers of the British Province to include brothers and sisters from other provinces in worshipping and studying together. It gave us a better sense of other worship practices that go on within our unity.

Whilst there have been many advantages to these heroic responses, there has been a shadow-side for the Church too. This might be identified as the **Disillusionment phase**. Some Ministers (who are only human beings after all) have questioned their vocation and their ability to do the work effectively - perhaps bringing retirement closer to mind; many elderly and other members haven't wanted to embrace the technology, but have instead craved physical, human connection; there has been a financial impact on many congregations as regular giving has become unstable with not getting out regularly to Church; and our Moravian schools have faced financial crisis as international boarders haven't been able to travel, and parents have demanded concessions for the on-line provision of education. These issues have seriously impacted the British Province financially. It has been difficult to provide a ministry for young people in many of our congregations as interactive ministries are more difficult on Zoom, and many youth leaders haven't wanted to work physically with young people who are perhaps unfairly regarded as 'vectors of infection'. Community lunches and dementia cafes have had to be halted, as work with the vulnerable, although highly needed, was just too risky. And just as things started to return to some sense of greater normality, the virus mutated again, leading to further restrictions and greater pandemic fatigue. For many ministers and Church leaders, it has been difficult to preach a gospel of hope and not become disillusioned themselves by the sense of 'treading water' - whilst accompanying others who are disillusioned. How do we hold on to some sense of Christian resilience as we journey through a pandemic that seems to have no obvious end?

Now, turning to the Church after COVID - what we might see as the **Reconstruction phase**. Because we don't know how long the pandemic will continue for, and what will be left of our Church, it is difficult to know how to reconstruct it - and there is no blueprint for recovery. No one has dealt with these particular set of circumstances and opportunities before, that we can follow. The scientists say that pandemics usually last about five years, but that is not a guaranteed period of time - and with the remarkable vaccines and medicines that have become available to us, that timeline may be shortened - yet other variants may yet come along and prolong it - we just don't know. Life is uncertain.

Currently, the situation is that there are about 1,000 members in the British Province, within 32 congregations (some of whom are just about holding on from closure), served by 17 ministers (at least eight of whom will be eligible for retirement within the next ten years). There are generations missing in most congregations, and the future looks problematic. Whenever the pandemic ends, what will remain, however, is a continued lived experience of God's presence, and a need to worship Him in

some form, as a response to spiritual need. People will seek different ways to relate to God as part of their recovery from the pandemic. There will still be societal need that is poorly met by political social provision. How might the Church play a part in meeting that need? There is a mental health pandemic among young people. How might the Church play a part in bringing young people to faith, where God is the touchstone of resilience in the lives of believers? There is much social isolation in our communities. How might the Church play a vital role in befriending the lonely? There is much homelessness and plenty of refugees. How might the Church play a part in providing for their needs through possibly providing language classes, housing and community building? How can we build up the Church through transforming ourselves, so that Christ lives more in us, and so that people want what we have, as His light shines from us? How can we enable a ministry that honours everyone's gifts, in which people feel called to work for Christ, and be used by the Church in such a way that they aren't squashed into a one-size-fits all approach to worship and ministry? There isn't a lack of spiritual need 'out there' - it's just that I'm not sure we know how to meet it anymore, or maybe we have lost confidence in ourselves - even as Ministers.

Reconstruction is certainly needed. However, reconstruction doesn't just mean entering another heroic phase, by trying to come up with loads of new initiatives - usually social and fellowship-based initiatives - without thinking about a **Wiser Living phase**. This, in my view, begins by first starting with where people are; by first acknowledging the loss and assessing the abilities, energy and gifts that are, or aren't, around us in our congregations. Entering a wiser living phase can mean beginning by asking difficult questions that we don't want to face. One of these might be 'is the Moravian Church in the British Province in need of end-of-life care (to put it bluntly)?' If it is, is it therefore lacking compassion to say that we have got to get better - to begin new initiatives for which there is little energy, and to renew? Might a more pastoral and sensitive winding down of the province be the wiser course of action?

Is there enough desire, and capacity for growth and survival among us, and if so, what does that look like? Are we too thinly spread in terms of resources, with each congregation putting its own self-interests first based on emotions, without looking at how their continued need to 'exist' with very small numbers and a seeming lack of purpose (other than keeping things the same), impacts on the bigger picture, and thus makes the province less able to offer effective ministry? How can we build ourselves up as the Body of Christ before we look at outreach? Is there the appetite for meeting social and spiritual need in our community, and for living our faith out beyond the Church walls, under the banner of the Moravian Church? Is there a vision - for 'where there is no vision, the people perish'.

There is no doubt that the Church needs to go where God is, to participate in God and to make God possible, and known, to others, if it is to survive. However, that may be in first facing the death of its usual self to enable its resurrection; or it may be in regrouping wisely and re-establishing a vision; and in the recognition that we who are alive, and remaining, must re-double our efforts to seek the renewal and growth of our church through having a vision for our Church.

If our present and future is the end-of-life care of our province because we have fulfilled our purpose for being, we must not see any closure, or integration of congregations - or of our province with another province, as failure. Instead, we must see it as a wise acknowledgment that maybe we have now lived the purpose for which God intended our Church, or congregation, and that it is time to end. 'For everything there is a season'. Or is God extending, and maybe re-establishing, our purpose in how we respond wisely beyond the pandemic? If so, what is our vision?

There are lots of questions here, whose answers we need to honestly face and discern. Yet, within all of this, ultimately, there is a recognition that we are here - not because we have chosen to be, but because God has chosen us to be - not because we decided it was good idea, but because God has called us, and drawn us, and guided us. And that is such a reassurance when our faith is tried and tested, and we worry if we can even hang on in here - to know that our faith journey is not our initiative but God's, and that we are held in the orbit of His divine grace.

We do not know what the coming year holds, let alone the more distant future. However, it is by the grace of God that we are here today, and it is by the grace of God we will be here next year too - if God wills it - *and if we will it too*. We may find ourselves mysteriously further drawn by the pull of divine grace - *but we will have to play our part too*. So, what will be your part? What will be our vision? To end, I want to leave you with a simple, yet profound and, I think, quite achievable vision - and it is this - *it is to be a light in the darkness, transforming our communities, one person at a time*. If our Church is to continue, this is what I believe we must work at - and the rest is in God's hands. And it need not be radical. If each member was to bring one person to Christ (and to become a member of our Church), then we would double in size! But I wonder if the apathy that pervades society towards faith, has also pervaded our souls?

Br Peter Gubi
Minister of Dukinfield Moravian Church
Professor of Counselling, University of Chester
Honorary Professor of Practical Theology, Teofilo Kisanji University



Unity Prayer Day Offering March 2022

This year we are being asked to support the Moravian Church in North America in their work of supporting refugees coming to North America.

According to UNHCR (the UN's Refugee Agency) about 450,000 refugees, more than half of whom are children, arrive in Canada and the United States each year. Refugee families arrive in North America with very few belongings after arduous journeys carrying what little they can.

Upon arrival, volunteers and donations are needed to provide food, cooking utensils, hygiene items, clothing, newborn supplies, school supplies, etc. In addition to these supplies, refugees are in need of support services to help them access safe housing, transportation, language courses, medical services, job training, and more. These supplies and services are essential to providing refugee families with the best possible chance of a successful new beginning.

How the Moravian Church in North America is Helping

The 2022 Unity Offering will support the resettlement efforts being undertaken by North American Moravians and our ecumenical partner agencies. Moravian congregations throughout the United States and Canada are engaging meaningfully with their local resettlement groups and are working to collect and distribute needed supplies. One congregation is currently hosting an Afghan refugee family in the wake of the United States' withdrawal from

Afghanistan in August 2021. On a broader scale, the Board of World Mission of the Moravian Church in North America has been in communication with our partner organisations, Church World Service, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and has provided financial assistance for their programs. These agencies have been working on refugee resettlement for decades, so partnering with their programs allows our contributions to be used efficiently and effectively.

The Unity Offering will support local congregations' efforts as well as the work of the BWM's partners throughout the U.S. and Canada. Below, you will find some examples of items that may be provided through the Unity Offering and their associated costs. In the April Moravian Messenger we will be publishing a personal account of this work from Louisa Frey who is a member of Central Moravian Church, Bethlehem, and of the Afghan Sponsoring Committee.

Some common costs associated with hosting a refugee family:

Item	Cost USD	Cost Sterling
Welcome Meal	75	55
Pantry filled with groceries	250	184
Beds and bedding for a family of four	500	368
Monthly rent (dependent upon location)	1,000	737

Unity Mission and Development Board, Dar Es Salaam

As a denomination that operates on an international level, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on how we work and engage with our partners across the globe. For much of the last two years, we have been able to make use of Zoom and other online forums which has been a fantastic development. However there has been a growing need for various meetings to take place in a physical setting to overcome any language or infrastructure barriers and continue to develop and foster relationships.

The Unity Mission and Development Board (UMDB) is such a meeting which took place over a week in November 2021 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, when we were able to meet, taking all the necessary (and plentiful!) safety precautions. The body is made up of representatives from all the regions in the Unity (African, Caribbean and Latin America, European and North American) as well as each Mission Agency and the Unity Women's Desk. Brothers and Sisters in attendance were from Czech Republic, German, Switzerland, Tanzania, Guyana, Nicaragua, Honduras, and USA. I attended on behalf of the British Mission Board.

The purpose of UMDB is to consider the direction and opportunities for new mission work as well as support established mission ventures. Much of the meeting was focussed on reporting from each region and considering the impact of the

pandemic. We also looked to the planning of the Unity Mission Conference which is due to take place in 2024. It is hoped that we can build upon the Unity Mission Agreement that was signed in South Africa in 2017, in the context of very tangible issues that are being faced around the Unity including climate change and how our theology of our Lord as both 'creator and saviour' leads us to be active in mission to actively live the Gospel in all interactions with all God creates.

In the same vein as climate change, the Unity Disaster Relief Fund was a matter of great discussion. A resolution was passed in Unity Synod for the creation of such a fund and it is hoped that good progress will be made on this soon with a working group being set up to establish the fund.

We also administer the Unity Mission and Development Fund and this year we will be supporting a conference for the Spanish Speaking Provinces in Panama, which will bring together leadership from our Spanish speaking partners for the first time.

The European and North American mission agencies also spent an additional day together, taking the opportunity to meet as we had been unable to take part in our annual council meeting. It is a useful time of sharing and developing good practice and common ideas in our mission activities



as well as seeking possibilities to support each other's projects in the future. I also was able to attend Moravian Church Foundation, which was taking place at the same time, in my capacity as acting Chair of the Worldwide Unity.

Going forward I am sure we will continue to use online platforms to meet in between physical conferences, and this has undoubtedly marked a shift in the way we will work in the future. However, there is productivity and key relationship building that can only be achieved when we have opportunities to come together. Aside from the business of the week, UMDB was an opportunity to do what Moravians do best, enjoy each other's company and fellowship. We also attended Tabata Moravian Church in Dar, sharing a meal with the congregation. It was a joy to be reconnected to brothers and sisters old and new, sharing stories and experiences. The joy at being together again was palpable.

Sr Roberta Hoey
Chair of British Mission Board

Herrnhut Hospitality in former times



In November 2021 I made a visit to Herrnhut for a meeting. On all my previous visits to Herrnhut I had stayed in the Komensky Conference Centre, but this time it was full for a conference, so we stayed at the Alt-Herrnhuter Haus on Comeniusstrasse 4 just opposite the Manse. It is a beautiful old house that managed to escape the destruction in 1945. It is a private bed and board house run by Karin Clemens and her husband Eberhard and is informally known as Pension Clemens. I learnt that in the former times, whilst East Germany was under Soviet influence, the Clemens family used to run the Congregation Guest House, called the Christian David House, or the Gästeheim.

2022 is the 300th anniversary of the founding of Herrnhut and many visitors from all over the world will be going to stay in Herrnhut during this year. They will be staying in Komensky and Alt Herrnhuter and hotels around the area; some will even be camping in the grounds of the Provincial Board Headquarters, the Vogtshof - but their experience will be different to the visitors who went in former times.

We take hospitality very much for granted and tend to expect certain standards but in the times gone by things were very difficult for the hosts of visitors in Herrnhut. It was, and still is, a place that that Moravians from across the world want to visit. Even though under very difficult conditions, the members of the Church provided gracious hospitality according to the accounts of those who visited then.

A number of trips were organised from the United Kingdom to Herrnhut during the 'former times', two by Br Harold Jones and two by Sr Libby Mitchell. The aim of these trips was not only to get to know such an important part of our Church story better but also to encourage the members of the Church living through such difficult times and remind them that they were not forgotten.

Sr Roberta Thompson recalls her stay at the Christian David Gästeheim: 'we stayed there on my first visit to Herrnhut as part of a tour organised by Sr Libby Mitchell and Sr Cora Ives in June 1988. The hotel had accommodation for 50 people and was situated at the Zinzendorf Square where Christian David and Br Neisser had built the first house in Herrnhut. I shall always

remember the warm welcome given to us by the Clemens family and the pretty dining room, where such amazing and tasty meals were provided for us, despite the many restrictions and food shortages at the time and the long queues at the shops even to buy the basics. It was not an easy time, and I admired our Brothers and Sisters for standing firm in their faith in the face of adversity and the many sacrifices that that entailed. Br and Sr Clemens made every effort to provide a comfortable and enjoyable stay for their many visitors from the DDR, West Germany and many other countries - a real haven of peace, calm and relaxation in a very special town.'

Perhaps there were times when the East German Government used such trips to 'showcase the state'. Sr Edna Cooper recalled on her visit to Herrnhut in 1981 for a Unity Synod, staying at the Schulungszentrum (training centre) on Comeniusstrasse that: 'food (including bananas) was available for the delegates to Synod so perhaps in a way we were being used by the State to publicise their image.' Sr Cooper has written a full article about her trip that will appear in a future edition of the Messenger.

Some members of the British Province stayed in Church members' homes when they visited Herrnhut, Br Fred Linyard visiting noted: 'I did stay once in the guest house when the Unity Mission Committee met in Herrnhut. I was very aware of the difficulties people had in feeding guests. On my other visits I stayed with families. I do have a vague memory stirring of hearing one morning that my host had gone out at 6am because word had gone around that the baker had bread and there was already a queue. Another fuzzy one is of hearing about a hostess who brought out a precious tin of sardines she had been saving for a special visitor (not me!). It's a long time ago but though memories are vague they still remind me of important experiences in a period most people have forgotten.'

I do hope that others will write in too about their memories of visits to Herrnhut and the other Eastern German congregations and the hospitality shown them. This part of our and their history will quickly disappear if we do not record it now.

Sr Sarah Groves
Minister at Gracehill Moravian Church

Harlesden, London

We thank our God for the opportunity of serving Him through the activities of His church.

Church Services: many congregation members have been faithfully attending services on Sundays, since the lockdown was lifted. We also remain in contact with our other members who continue to shield or are unable to attend services. Sunday services continue at 11am which include the monthly celebration of Holy Communion (excluding January). We thank our minister and the four lay preachers and retired minister who led services on a rota basis. We also thank the visiting ministers who have led worship (Rev Edward Sanniez for the harvest and Rev David Howarth for the Anniversary services). Additionally, we thank Sr Ola Lawal who was invited to lead one of our services, as a visiting lay preacher.

Congregation News: from 1st September 2020 to January 2022 eight members went to be with our Lord, Srs Violet Christian, Violet Philips, Leonora Henry, Avis Allison, Anne Audain, Brs Glenford Warren, Wilford Gray and Norman Blackman. We thank God for their service.

Congregation activities: Bible Studies are now held on Zoom on Wednesdays at 7.30pm and Intercessory prayers are held via Zoom on Fridays at 1.30pm.



© Br Edwin Quidan

We thank our God for His grace and mercies, for the strength for arranging the flowers when we reopened in 2020 and last year 2021. Thanks to all who donated flowers for their birthdays, anniversaries and special occasions. There are now four members of the team.

Fundraising Activities: our fundraising activities in 2020 and 2021 were cancelled, due to the national lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions. We are planning to do some fundraising later this year, with a bazaar on Saturday 19th November 2022. Thank God for His grace and mercies.

Sr Geneva Adjai

Salem, Oldham

Shortly after the first lockdown we had a load of rubbish dumped on the drive. As the Pre-school weren't in we decided to leave it so that we had no unwelcome visitors leaving their rubbish, however, the Council removed it without charge or informing us. We have the visitors and their rubbish back every week now. Vandalism has also been a problem, with no one living near the church now.

We managed to get the school flat roof relaid and it has only leaked once in very heavy rain, so a partial success.

Despite the frequent changes we have managed to hold services at Christmas the last two years, but the attendance has not

been as good as previous years. When Br Martin Smith retired in September we had difficulty finding people to take services, with no lay preachers in the congregation, except for Communion services which Br Harry Bintley very kindly leads. We decided to hold services on alternate Sundays in the New Year, which seems to be working well.

Sadly, in the last few months we have lost three members of the congregation, including Sr Marjorie Bottomley and Br Geoff Tillson who were stalwart and long-standing members. Our numbers are dwindling but we keep hopeful that we can keep going until we get a new minister.

Sr Anne Broadbent

Swindon

During the last eighteen months, just as we have been finding new ways to worship, so too has our fundraising and charity support had to adapt.

We moved to online craft markets and our 'stall on the steps' meant we could hold some of our Fayres outside.

Thankfully, our hall is big enough to be able to pack shoeboxes whilst socially distancing. Hence we were able to send 166 shoe boxes to the Foundation for Social Change Appeal.

As a result of our fundraising/stalls, we have also been able to send:

- £180 to Foundation for Social Change
- £312 to MWA/YPMA
- £121 to Water Aid
- £500 to keeping Maasai girls in education.

We hope that this year we will be able to get out and about to local churches and fetes once again.

Mary's meals backpacks for school have been unable to collect during this time, but we are stocked up and ready to start filling bags in the hope that the charity will be up and running again soon.

Our Friday night quiz and social evenings continue on Zoom, bringing together those near and far.



© Sr Sandy Mundy

Rainbows celebrating Chinese New Year & the year of the tiger

We are now having a combination of face to face and Zoom services, seeing some new as well as familiar faces.

Sunday Sparks and Rainbows are pleased to be back in the hall and we look forward in faith to what 2022 has in store for us.

Sr Sandy Mundy

From Church House

Ordination

On behalf of the Provincial Board, we are delighted to announce that the ordination of Sr Christine Emanuel as Deacon will take place on Saturday 26th March at Hornsey at 2pm, with ministers robing from 1.30pm. Br Joachim Kreusel will be the presiding Bishop and the preacher will be Br Edwin Quidan.

More details will follow as necessary, particularly in regard to any COVID-19 developments.

*Yours in Christ's Service,
Provincial Board of the Moravian Church.*

Provincial Diary for March

28 Feb-3 Mar	Serving Ministers and Lay Workers' Retreat Sarum College, Salisbury	
12	Lancashire District Conference	on Zoom
16	Church Service Committee	on Zoom
19	Western District Conference	on Zoom
24-25	Provincial Board Meeting	Church House
26	Ordination as Deacon of Sr Christine Emanuel	Hornsey Moravian Church

Congregational Register

Baptism

17th Oct 2021	Eve Erica-Jane Taylor	Hall Green
30th Jan 2022	Teddy George Thomas Naylor	Fairfield

Marriage

29th Jan 2022	Tracy Ross & Shem Elliott	Hall Green
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Death

23rd June 2021	Joan Tate	Hall Green
25th Dec 2021	Beryl Corr	Royton
6th Jan 2022	Alan Baguley	Fairfield
6 Jan 2022	Geoffrey Tillson	Salem
10 Jan 2022	Felicity Shaw	Salem
11th Jan 2022	Almin Gillina (Olney) Gumbs	Hall Green
18th Jan 2022	Jean Littlewood	Dukinfield

1	Founding of the Brethren's Church in 1457
	Unity Prayer Day
	Shrove Tuesday
	St David's Day
4	Ash Wednesday
5	World Day of Prayer (www.wwdp.org.uk)
8	International Women's Day (www.internationalwomensday.com)
17	St Patrick's Day
18	Holi - Hindu
20	Spring Equinox
25	UN International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade (www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/)
27	Mothering Sunday
	Summer-time begins

*Dates to
remember!*

Notices

MWA (Moravian Women's Association) Day 2022

On 30th April 2022 at 2pm, the MWA will host its annual MWA Day service online via Zoom. The service will follow our usual morning service format including the report from Central Committee which will have been held the day before also via Zoom. Sr Carol Ackah has agreed to be our speaker using our current theme of 'Dreams and Visions'. If you would like to join the service - and please note the service is not just for MWA members - you will need an email address, internet access and Zoom on your laptop/tablet/phone. Please send your email address to gillian.taylor@moravian.org.uk and then I can add you to the list of people attending. Nearer the time I will send you a link to join the service with instructions.

Sr Gillian Taylor

Fulneck School development

As reported at Synod 2021, the Provincial Board, as Trustees of Fulneck School and on behalf of the Moravian Church, have been supporting the school through the last number of years as it reviews its direction and implements strategies for continuous development.

We are now pleased to announce that we have entered into a management agreement with Bellevue Education. Bellevue has 22 schools in its group, and their approach is to provide practical support, whilst at the same time allowing Fulneck to retain its unique strengths and character. Its team of very experienced former headteachers will take over the management tasks carried out by our current governing body. The daily running of the school will still be the responsibility of the Principal, Ms Francine Smith and her Senior Leadership Team; the governance duties for the school, especially its relationship with the Charities' Commission, rest with the Provincial Board, as Trustees of Fulneck School.

We are looking forward to seeing this partnership develop. Bellevue recognises that our school's proud history, unique approach to education and pastoral care, should be preserved to offer breadth of choice to local families who share our values.

Summer Camp 2022

Date: 1st-5th August 2022

Place: Beverley Friary Youth Hostel, HU17 0DF

For: young people ages 10-17

Availability: Limited spaces

Cost: £130 each

Summer Camp 2022 will have a new format meeting for five days in Yorkshire. There will still be all the usual fun and games, bible studies, etc.

To register an interest and to obtain your booking forms first register at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/summer-camp-2022-tickets-209093011827>

More information to follow and forms will be available from early 2022.



Hall Green United Community Church



© Br Blair Kesseler

The Congregational Church in Sparkhill was founded in 1902 and moved into purpose-built buildings in the 1930s. I first attended on Christmas Day 1962 because I needed to impress a girl who worshipped there! It was a successful church for many years and joined the fledgling United Reformed Church in 1972. But by 1974 the congregation was dwindling and spending more time on maintenance than mission. The church meeting took the decision to close the church. However, before that closure happened, we were approached by the Birmingham Moravian Church with a view to amalgamation.

The Birmingham Moravian Church had been formed in 1968 to formalise a growing number of Moravians from the Caribbean who had been meeting together for many years. They had been worshipping at Ladypool Road Congregational Church but knew our buildings because they had used them for weddings. After negotiations the two churches combined to form Sparkhill United Church in 1975.

The new church was served and led by a succession of Moravian ministers but maintained its close ties with the URC. In fact, some of our ministers served URC churches in the district and one, Rev Geoffrey Tate, became chair of the URC district. Although the church prospered, the buildings that we occupied didn't. Although only completed in 1934 it had numerous design faults, leaked badly and was impossible to heat. In 2006 the church made another bold decision. To demolish our buildings and build a new Community Church. However, as soon as Birmingham City Council heard about it, they had the building listed so our plans were ruined.

We looked at refurbishment, but it would have cost over one million pounds and would still not have given us the facilities that we wanted. Finally, the leaks and the cold got the better of us, and the congregation moved up the road to Hall Green Methodist Church in 2007. The plan was for us to worship in their hall, while they continued to meet in the church, and we shared refreshments afterwards. It soon became clear that this was a ridiculous idea and in January 2008 we started to worship together every week.

Led by our two ministers, Rev David Howarth and Rev Peter Bates, we signed a Declaration of Intent later that year and a Sharing Agreement in 2013. On the 19th of October 2014 we adopted a new constitution and officially became Hall Green United Community Church.

The Hall Green Methodist Church was formed in 1924. They

were a vibrant, active and forward-thinking community who welcomed the newcomers in wholeheartedly. The new church continued with two ministers, one Moravian, one Methodist, until we settled with one minister responsible for the whole church. The first to take up that challenge was Rev Lorraine Shorten, who arrived in September 2017. The challenge for any minister here is to be committed not only to their own denomination, but to the other two and Lorraine tackled that head on and with great success.

One of her first challenges was to oversee the huge regeneration plan for the buildings which completed the first, and major, stage in late 2018. We now offer our local, very varied, community facilities which, pre-pandemic, were used by many different groups. Bookings are now returning, and our local community gives us positive feedback.

The church members have embraced their membership of three denominations and are kept up to date with a weekly newsletter and a quarterly magazine. These also helped to keep us all involved during lockdown.

Led by Sr Lorraine and a dedicated tech team we were able to continue worship and regular prayer groups throughout the pandemic. Services went on Zoom almost immediately and we now are meeting back in the church buildings but continue live on Zoom. We believe that these hybrid services are now a vital part of our ongoing mission.

Like most churches we face challenges going forward. Our membership declined during COVID, but we remain the largest Moravian Church in the UK and one of the largest Methodist churches in the Birmingham district, so we have much to build on.

Like every congregation we stand on the shoulders of Saints, too many to mention. One, however, stands out and that is our late brother, Ashton Mackintosh. He was there at the birth of the Birmingham Moravian Church, helped negotiate the agreement that formed Sparkhill United Church and was a firm supporter of the union with the Methodists. We have also been served by many outstanding ministers and laypeople over the years.

HGUCC looks forward to continuing to serve the people of our locality and being an integral part of three great traditions.

Br Blair Kesseler



© Sr Evelyn McIntosh

The Moravian Messenger

Official Journal of the Moravian Church in the British Province.
Published monthly by the authority of the Provincial Synod.

Advertisements and all communications concerning distribution and supply should be sent to the Editorial Team.

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Contributions for the Messenger should reach the editorial team by the 7th day of the preceding month.

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