



Ascension

Ascension Day this year falls on Thursday 18th May, but because of everything else going on in the world and in people's lives, it is an occasion that will pass by most people without any thought or reflection.

As Christians, though, we mustn't let Ascension pass unnoticed, because when Jesus 'ascended into the clouds', things changed in this world of ours, and changed forever.

We don't pay anywhere near the same attention to Ascension as we do to Christmas or Easter or Pentecost. Perhaps that's not surprising, because compared to those great stories which fill the gospels and the later writings of the New Testament, there is very little in scripture about the Ascension.

When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Please read **Acts 1.6-11**

Luke's account in Acts is about as descriptive as it gets. Perhaps the gospel writers are trying to suggest to us that what physically happened on that mountainside is not that important. We cannot explain in human terms what is an inexplicable act of God, but we can and must try to understand what this event means.

For Jesus, it was a release from the confines of an earthly existence. He was now free from human constraints, to be here and everywhere, omni-present.

For his followers, then and now, you and me, the Ascension gives three great messages. Three timeless messages for all followers of Jesus, which can be simply illustrated with three cards that you might receive in a morning postal delivery:

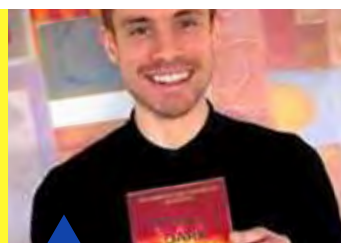
- A birthday card.
- An invitation card.
- A postcard.

A birthday card: the simplest of birthday gifts, you are not forgotten. At the Ascension, Jesus promises his not-forgotten followers a gift - 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.'

An invitation: but not any invitation. This is a Royal Command, a summons. Something which you cannot refuse - 'you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

A postcard: we send postcards to our family and friends with a personal message. And here in the Ascension, the angels give the followers of Jesus a personal message - be ready to welcome Jesus back. Jesus will come again.

continues inside on page 51



Book Review
'From the Dark into
the Light'

(page 50)



Bishops' Conference in
Doorn, Netherlands

(page 52)



The work of Irish Council
of Churches and Irish
Inter-Church Meeting over
the years (page 54)



BMB News
- Sikonge 100

(page 57)

Quite frequently I listen to the German news, in order to keep abreast with what is happening in my country of birth, and also to compare it with other news and personal reports I receive from around the world.

But sometimes I'm tempted to not listen, because one word is used far too often: 'Streit' which means 'argument'/'quarrel'/'dispute' - 'Streit' between individuals, political parties, employers and employees, groups with different interests or opinions within and outside the church, and nations.

I know that healthy disputes are needed in order to move things forward in politics, science, the arts, in the church and also in many personal settings.

But ulterior motives come frequently into play and turn a situation sour. Unhealthy disputes have often their roots in insecurity or hunger for dominance. On the world stage a possible extreme consequence is war, on a personal level it can be spitefulness in many different shades, but more severe outcomes are also possible.

Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch watchmaker and later a Christian writer and public speaker, together with her family, was arrested by the Nazis for hiding Jewish people. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to a Concentration camp where Betsie died. Before she died, she told Corrie, 'There is no pit so deep that He (God) is not deeper still.' Corrie survived, and after the Second World War she travelled extensively talking and preaching about the healing that God provides. 'Forgiveness is an act of the will', she said, 'and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.'

I believe this is a good recipe for the resolution of unhealthy disputes. After all, it is God's way: 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.' (Ephesians 4:32).

Br Joachim Kreusel



Book Review



Callum L Gamble attended Fulneck School from 2008-2015 and has written a book entitled 'From the Dark into the Light' which acknowledges the part that Fulneck community and settlement has played in the journey to find the positive side of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

'I loved walking around the old buildings and hearing about their past. It made me feel safe because I knew about the buildings'. The history of the settlement made him feel comfortable and as if he was part of a bigger picture, something that soothed him which is important in the functioning of people with ASD.

Callum was one of the first pupils at Fulneck that had a statement for Autism. Therefore, having Callum as a pupil was a two-way learning process, teaching Callum and learning from him. As each academic year passed, we saw Callum excel in all areas of the curriculum including those he felt were his weaker subjects. When he first came to the school his statement detailed that English was one of his weakest subjects. However, he went on to take English Literature and Language as A/S Level subjects. Suffice to say Callum's success at school was a whole staff team effort involving the

learning support unit, the teachers and the learning support assistants who served as an individual bridge to learning. Callum himself embodied the spirit of Fulneck. He succeeded in all areas of the curriculum, gaining his GCSEs and A-Levels, which led the path to university where he gained a first-class degree in Creative Media Technology. He also developed greatly as a person gaining confidence in himself, and his understanding of what it means to be Autistic.

His conclusion about Fulneck School was that 'It made me feel safe' and 'the atmosphere and environment helped me'. I particularly enjoyed his comment which described myself 'fun fact ... My

LSU teacher also taught Robbie Williams (who is Dyslexic) in another school so I knew I was in good hands'. It is surprising the facts pupils remember.

The 13th-19th March was Neurodiversity Celebration Week in which the Neurodiverse community is celebrated. Whether you are neurotypical or neurodiverse the book is a perspective into the functioning of an Autistic person. As a Moravian I was surprised and encouraged that a young person found so much hope and inner strength within our cherished buildings.

From the Dark into the Light: How I Came to See the Positive Side of Autism, written by Callum L Gamble. Published by Kreativeinc Agency Ltd, 2023, ISBN _ 9781739356811. This book can be purchased from Amazon: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dark-into-Light-Positive-Autism/dp/1739356810/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=from+the+dark+into+the+light&qid=1680613539&prefix=from+the+d%2Ccaps%2C129&sr=8-1

Sr Kathy Dunn

Former SENCO at Fulneck and a member at Fulneck Moravian Church

Ascension *continued*

Winston Churchill said some memorable things in his speeches during World War II. One such paragraph could be used to describe the ascension of Jesus:

*'Now this is not the end.
It is not even the beginning of the end.
But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.'*

And therein lies the Ascension challenge to the church. The Ascension marks the end of the beginning, and there is so much more to be accomplished.

The three great messages of the Ascension:

- we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit;
- we have been given the Royal Command to be Jesus' witnesses;
- we have been encouraged to await his coming again.

These encourage the followers of Jesus to have confidence not in our church but in Jesus' Church, not in our faith but in Jesus' gospel, not in our success but in Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

Too easily we don't expect Jesus to be present in our worship, to speak in our hearts, or to change anything in response to our prayers. Too easily we remember our weaknesses and forget his wonderful and beautiful strength.

The Ascension takes us back to the deep truth of a crucified, risen and ascended Lord, so that we may continue to worship him with joy and taste the wonder and certainty of his love.

Ascension makes us lift up our eyes ...

In conclusion, I ask you to turn to Hymn 326 in the Moravian Hymnbook, to read the inspiring words of Edward Burns hymn, 'We have a Gospel to proclaim ...'

Br David Newman



What's on in your area for your families and young people?

We are endeavouring as PYCC to collate together monthly the known events and services that are shared to us by the churches across the province of events and services that are deliberately aimed at growing and nurturing our families, children and young people. We hope that by advertising these regularly, people will become more aware of the events in their local areas that they can then share with their families, friends and neighbours and use these as a springboard to invite people to them. All of these events are discipling and

feeding this younger end of our church family which, as a Province, we are hoping to see growth and development in.

Below is a list of events that have been sent to us for the month of May. If you look at it and see that your family / youth event is not advertised please contact Sr Claire Maxwell so she can collate the information for the month of June for you in this space. Her contact details are: claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk

Here are the events in May:

North

27th May - Summer Camp Taster Days North at Fulneck Moravian Church 10am-3pm for anyone 8-17 years old. Contact Br James Woolford for more information: james.woolford@moravian.org.uk.

Yorkshire

12th May - Adventurers Youth Group (9-13 years old) Lower Wyke Sunday School at 7pm. £1.50 for Tuck.

19th May - Adventurers Youth Group (9-13 years old) Lower Wyke Sunday School at 7pm. £1.50 for Tuck.

21st May - Café Church is at Lower Wyke in the Sunday School at 10.30am. All ages welcomed.

28th May - Senior Youth Group (14+) Lower Wyke Sunday School 7pm-9pm.

Lancashire

May 14th - Café Church is at Fairfield Moravian Church in the College at 10.30am. All Ages welcomed.

South

27th May - Summer Camp Taster Days South at Hornsey Moravian Church 10am-3pm for anyone 8-17 years old. Contact Sr Joy Raynor for more information: safeguarding@moravian.org.uk.

London & Bedford

7th May - Fetter Lane Moravian Church are having a bring and share picnic followed by a Communion Service at 3pm as part of their Coronation Celebrations. All families welcome.

20th May - Lego Club 10am-11.30am Hornsey Church Hall. Cost: £3 for the first child and £2 for each additional sibling. No need to book. Refreshments provided.

Northern Ireland

5th May - University Road Youth Meet Up. For more information contact Rachel on: moravianyouthni@gmail.com.

28th May - Kilwarlin Moravian Church have a Youth Sunday at 10am where the service is particularly appropriate for those who are younger and families.

Gracehill Moravian Church has a Youth Fellowship which is having an end of year celebration trip to Bangor. Please contact moravianyouthni@gmail.com for further information.

Midlands

7th May - Coronation Celebration at Ockbrook Moravian Church at 12 Noon. Open Air Family Service in the Garden of the Lecture Hall, followed by a bring-and-share-lunch, games and music.



© Br Joachim Kreusel

Bishops' Conference in Doorn, Netherlands

From 15th-22nd March 2023 twenty-one bishops of the world-wide Moravian Church met at a conference centre in Doorn, Netherlands. The last such gathering took place in 2014. The theme of the conference was: Learn to do good, seek justice (Isaiah 1:17); cross cutting theme: The role of bishops in mediation.

The main languages of the conference were English and Spanish. Br Sam Gray was not only constantly translating but also playing the piano and contributing valuable insights - what a blessing! Of course, everyone was bringing helpful contributions to the group, but Br Sam's multitasking was noticeably outstanding.

The opening lecture by Dr Samuel Lee gave plenty of food for thought. Samuel came with his family as a refugee to the Netherlands when he was eight years old. He is now a theologian, sociologist, and the director of the Foundation University Amsterdam offering free education for those who cannot afford to study at a regular university, mainly for migrants.

Samuel's focus is on combining the Gospel with social justice and activism. He would ask questions such as: 'What good is it to talk about the heavenly home, if the undocumented migrant has no-where to live?' and 'What good is it to talk about Jesus healing the sick, if the migrant has no access to treatment?' After his Sunday services, meetings of 'grass-roots' organisations and other institutions such as labour union take place. Eventually, an Academy for migrants and stateless people was founded. 'What have I learnt?', Samuel asked, and his answer is: 'Regardless of my religion, faith or church, faith should not be used as a tool of oppression and exclusion. I have learned that human rights are for all people, even when I disagree with them. As a Christian leader I cannot turn my back when I see injustice.'

Samuel started reading the Bible from a perspective of justice, and this had consequences. His personal office and the church office were transformed into sleeping places for many months and cleaned up every morning. Knowing from his own experience what it means to be a refugee he will not stop lobbying for

those who are in a similar position now.

Throughout our conference we came across the topic of justice many times and intensely listened to each other. We have shared life across continents and countries: Tanzania and South Africa; Suriname and Guyana; Antigua, Honduras and Nicaragua; Cuba and the United States; the Czech Republic, Switzerland and the Netherlands; Germany and the United Kingdom.

As an example of what we shared, we can look at the 'Pilgrimage of grace'. In post-apartheid South Africa reconciliation remains work in progress. The 'Pilgrimage of grace' (23rd-25th September 2022) began with a worship service at Moravian Hill Church in District Six of Cape Town. Over 60,000 native Khoi people were forcibly removed from this area during the 1970s by the Whites' regime. Sadly, the Dutch Reformed Church supported the regime in its diabolic system of apartheid. The members of the indigenous Moravian Church suffered immensely. For nearly 300 years the two churches lived in tension, but now the time for healing has come. The 'Pilgrimage of grace' found its climax in Genadendal (Valley of grace) where the Moravian missionary Georg Schmidt started the first mission among the Khoi people in 1737. In the worship service at Genadendal the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church has apologised profoundly on behalf of his church for every aspect of apartheid including the role the church played in it.

Another example for what we shared was Sr Blair Couch's report on the Unity Women's Desk, and its programmes which support and empower women all over the world. These programmes do make a difference: End Violence Against Women, Increase access to Health, Overcome Poverty/Entrepreneurship, Parenting for Justice, Women in Ministry and Education for Girls and Women.

In further reports we have heard of lively choirs in Tanzania who accompany evangelising preachers. And we even had our very own 'Bishops band' - some very musical bishops among us, enthusing everyone around!

Both, sharing of joy but also bearing each

other's burdens, was part of the conference, and of course singing and praying together.

We also embarked on a one-day excursion to Naarden and surroundings. Jan Amos Komenský (Latin: Comenius) (1592-1670), the last bishop of the ancient Moravian Church, is buried there. The Comenius Museum opened just for us!

On Saturday we visited the nearby Moravian Settlement in Zeist and learnt all about past and present life, and the singing service in the evening was something very special!

On Sunday many of us preached in Moravian Churches in the wider area. I was invited to preach in Rotterdam, but before I was taken around the city, which was interesting and lovely! Rotterdam Moravian Church is a place I have visited several times before, but this time it was different. Whilst in the past I was there on a Sunday morning when the congregation, consisting mainly of members of Surinamese origin, worships. This time I visited in the afternoon when members of predominant Hindustani origin come together for worship. How good it is to not only use Dutch and English, but also to sing in Indonesian and Hindi. At the end of the service, I shared something about the Moravian Church in South Asia, and people were so interested as their cultural background has similar roots.

The fellowship in Zeist and Rotterdam (and my colleagues in other places) along with the hospitality were so enriching and heartening. Thanks to everyone!

Br Volker Schulz, living in Switzerland, has done the lion-share in preparing and leading the conference, and he also prepared the liturgy for the evening prayers in English, Swahili, Spanish, Miskitu and German. What a richness and beauty!

For the last days of the conference Br Jørgen Bøytler (Denmark), the Unity Board Administrator, joined us. Jørgen shared information on Unity matters, including the world heritage application for Gracehill (NI), Herrnhut (Germany) and Bethlehem (US), the Unity Youth desk, archives, the upcoming Unity Synod

in Cape Town to be held in September this year and much more. The bishops have two seats at Unity Synod. Sr Blair Couch (US) and myself were elected as representatives of the bishops.

We have heard about the Moravian work in all areas represented by one or more bishops, but we also heard of other areas e.g. Sierra Leone; we touched on topics like 'The church and slavery'; we have, sadly, also heard of corruption in governments and churches and the pain that comes with it.

What a pleasant coincidence it was that the Provincial Board of the Continental Province of the Moravian Church was meeting nearby, and they visited us on the first evening of our conference. We enjoyed each other's fellowship and had a time of sharing.

On the last evening of our conference youth workers of the Moravian Church from across Europe visited us as they had their meeting nearby too. It was a wonderful time of learning from each other.

A pastoral letter to all Moravian congregations world-wide was drafted, discussed, and finalised (please see the next column).

Unfortunately, not all bishops who intended to participate, were able to come, because of illness, the inability to obtain the visa etc.

During mealtimes (and the meals were excellent!) and breaks we had time to share individually, and also met in regional groups.

The most beautiful part of the conference was the oneness we could feel among us. God's spirit is at work!

A big Thank You goes to all who have helped making this conference memorable and valuable.

Br Joachim Kreusel
Bishop of the Unity

*I dream,
I dream of a day
A new day,*

*when bullets are replaced
with roses,*

*when rage
with laughter,*

*when hate
with a smile,*

*Freedom, oh Freedom
How sweet is your taste
How bitter is your price!*

- by Samuel Lee.



UNITY BISHOPS' CONFERENCE March 15-22, 2023 DOORN, NETHERLANDS

A Pastoral Letter to the Congregations of the Moravian Unity

Dear Sisters and Brothers, and friends of the Moravian Church,

We - a group of bishops of the world-wide Moravian Church - greet you from Doorn in the Netherlands, where we have met for one week.

We have experienced the richness and diversity of the world-wide Moravian Church. As we have prayed together and looked into each other eyes we found the openness to cut through barriers of language, culture and history. We can see the same beauty in the world-wide Moravian Church, and indeed in the sum of all of God's children.

We have faced the reality that there is also evil in the world-wide Moravian Church and among all God's children.

The topic of our gathering is **"Learn to do good, seek justice"** (Isaiah 1:17).

We have listened to reports which describe structural injustices, corruption and malfunctioning of whole societies. Wars are raging, more weapons are made and used. Violence against and oppression of women and children continues. Modern slavery is still going on and even increasing. Self-inflicted climate change is destroying God's creation and the habitat of all living. The poor, who have caused the least of this, suffer the most and their opportunity for a dignified life is reduced. Tens of thousands of people are refugees as a consequence.

We have heard reports of divisions within the church.

We say clearly: All this is against God's will. We pray that God may open our eyes and hearts for where we are involved in these things, and may give us the grace and strength to bring ourselves in line with God's intentions.

We are immensely grateful that God in Jesus has come into all this mess, that he has taken the suffering of the whole world on his shoulders, and eventually given a death-blow to death. New life is emerging.

We would like to encourage you to speak up against such injustices and destruction, and to look out for opportunities that lead towards the restoration of God's creation and towards functioning societies. In this way we can begin or continue a pilgrimage of grace towards healing.

We have listened to each other, and to reports from congregations and individuals in our world-wide church. We have shared life-stories. We have learnt anew how Jesus calls people into ministry which focuses on God's living word and deed. We are greatly encouraged, and would like to thank you all for the part you play in building the kingdom of God. Know that we also pray for ways in which you can encourage youth in participation and discipleship in the body of Christ.

We have listened to heart-warming accounts of refugees being taken into the fellowship of a church. Body and soul are cared for. Human dignity is restored. Heaven has come to earth, and earth has been lifted up towards heaven. Jesus is at work in our midst.

We would like to encourage you to reach out and care for body and soul, not just for those who are "like us", but for everyone we come across.

We are on a pilgrimage through life together. We are learners at all times, until we enter God's kingdom. It is our fervent prayer that God's offer of healing in Jesus Christ may be accepted and spread by you, and by people all over the world, "so that they may be one" (John 17:21).

Bless each other in the name of God. Speak words of life into each other's situations. Be generous in your actions of love. Pray without ceasing. Let your love be known to all people.

With love and God's blessing,

Armando Rusindo	Evelio Romero Marmol	Rodger Ruiters
Petr Krasny	Sandoval Martinez Atas	Renold Pansa
Theodor Clemens	Rogelio Zacarias	Lawi Afwilile Mwankuga
Volker Schulz	Joseph Rivera John	Conrad Nguvumali
Humbert Hessen	M. Blair Couch	Sikombe
Kingsley Lewis	Samuel Gray	Kenan Salim Panja
Joachim Kreusel	G. Thomas Shelton	
Brinmore Phaul	Augustine P. Joemath	

The work of Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter-Church Meeting over the years



Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson (ICC Past-President 2020-2022), Rt Rev Andrew Forster (ICC President 2022-2024) and Bishop Sarah Groves (ICC Vice President 2022-2024) at the ICC Annual Meeting in March 2022

© Irish Council of Churches

This article follows on from the first in this series marking the centenary of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC) and the fifty-year anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Talks which led to the formation of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM). I now seek to highlight some areas which member churches of the ICC find themselves working in together with the basis of connecting in Christ above all else. Bishop Sarah Groves is currently the ICC Vice President. Running closely alongside the areas of work of the ICC is that of the IICM where the ICC engages with the Catholic Church on many similar areas.

There are four themes running through the work of both organisations, these are: Identity, Peace and Reconciliation, Social Justice and the Common Good and Building Relationships. With each area of work, member churches, including the Moravian Church, bring specific insight from their own members to help shape what churches can do together to speak into certain situations. We use the approach of having specific working groups for each issue. This not only enables us to cover many work areas, but it also means individuals from member churches who have a special interest or knowledge on a specific topic will form part of the working group on that issue and allows us to work on various projects in tandem.

The work that the ICC and the IICM are involved in around identity looks at issues such as the increased polarisation and tensions about issues of identity and culture in Northern Ireland due to the current political impasse. While in a wider all-island and British-Irish context, we work closely to respond to the issues Brexit has reignited such as the debate about the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and the relationships between the different nations on these islands. When we seek to discuss and respond to such issues, the core process

of the ICC and the IICM is to listen to the other. While we might not always agree on a solution, we can agree on working for the common good of all on this island.

While the Ballymascanlon Talks in 1973 saw the ignition of the discussion about peace during the height of violence in Northern Ireland, the ICC and the IICM continue to build on work in this area. As our peace process is ongoing, so is the work we do as churches on peace and reconciliation. Over recent years we have established 'The Unfinished Work of Peace', a consultation paper which aims to support critical self-reflection by churches on their contribution to the work of building peace, acknowledging that there are areas where we could do more, or be open to doing things differently. The four main areas which it covers are also the key areas of collaboration and discussion within the ICC and the IICM on this topic: support for victims, collective commemoration and memorialisation, formal legacy processes and structures, and tackling paramilitarism.

In terms of social justice and the common good, we, together with our member churches, aim to play our part as people of faith in walking alongside those who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Priority areas of work in this context currently include housing and homelessness, the impact of welfare reform in Northern Ireland and support for refugees and migrants. We have developed a bible study resource: 'In Six Months A Lot Can Change' to tackle questions around housing across the island. We also understand the importance of stewardship in caring for the world God has given us and so have spent time creating Climate Justice

Affirmations agreed upon by our member churches. These also give practical ways in which churches may be involved in caring for creation.

The final work area is intertwined throughout the others. It is our commitment to building relationships. This is the foundation of both the Irish Council of Churches and the Inter-Church Meeting, and it is something that we aim to model in the ever-changing public square. The importance of our unity in diversity, active listening and dialogue based on mutual respect runs through each working group, conference and resource. We acknowledge that historically we have not always fulfilled our commitment to building relationships as churches and so we continue to discern how we can adapt and change in order to serve this island in the most effective way we can while working together for the common good.

Future articles in this series will look at how the churches in Ireland work together today through the ICC and the IICM, and the future plans of the organisations. All resources mentioned in this article are available on our website irishchurches.org. If you would like any further information about our current work, please contact the Inter-Church Centre at info@irishchurches.org.



Megan Ross
ICC
Communications
Officer

Where is God when things go wrong?

This is the second piece in a short series of reflections.

One of the most challenging questions people of faith face is: 'Where is God when things go wrong?' When we face trials, it can be difficult to reconcile our belief in a loving, all-powerful God with the pain and suffering we experience. However, even in the midst of difficulty, there are reasons to hold onto hope and trust in God.

First, we must recognise that we live in a broken world. We have been blessed, and cursed, with free will that affects everything around us. While God did not create the world with pain and hardship in mind, that free will and the consequences of wrongdoing have brought about much of the suffering we experience.

Second, we can trust that God is still in control, even when things feel out of control. This is not to say that God causes our suffering, but rather that He can use even the hardest circumstances for good. We see this in the life of Joseph in the Old Testament, who was sold into slavery by his own brothers but later became a powerful ruler in Egypt and was able to save his family from famine. Joseph recognised that God had a purpose for his suffering, saying, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives' (Genesis 50:20).

Third, we must remember that God is present with us in our suffering. The Bible tells us that God is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18). He is not distant or uncaring, but rather He is with us in the midst of our pain. Jesus himself experienced great suffering on the cross, and in doing so, He identified with our own pain and struggles.

Fourth, we can find comfort in the community of believers. When we are hurting, it can be tempting to isolate ourselves, but God designed us for relationships. We are called to bear one another's burdens and support one another in times of

need (Galatians 6:2). Being part of a community of believers can provide much-needed encouragement and help us to see that we are not alone in our struggles.

Finally, we can find hope in the promise of eternal life. On a personal level, this became clear for me when I was in the hospital nearly ten years ago waiting for major surgery. There was no guarantee of success; in fact, the odds of surviving the kind of cancer I had were about 1 in 5, but I was strangely calm. I am not a 'brave' person; I tend to run away from conflict, but I suddenly realised that I was not afraid of death. Dying still worries me, but being dead doesn't frighten me at all. In my hour of trouble, God was there, reassuring me.

While we may not understand why we are experiencing certain trials in this life, we can trust that God has prepared a better future for us. As the apostle Paul wrote, 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all' (2 Corinthians 4:17). The difficulties we face in this life are temporary, but the joys and blessings of heaven will last forever.

In conclusion, while it can be difficult to understand where God is when things go wrong, we can hold onto hope by remembering that we live in a broken world, trusting that God is in control, recognising His presence with us in our suffering, finding comfort in the community of believers, and finding hope in the promise of eternal life.

Br Blair Kessler
Hall Green



Letter to the Editorial Team

Dear UK Provincial Moravian members,

I would like to say thank you and my heartfelt gratitude to those who attended the goodbye and memorial service at Lower Wyke for the late Rev Br Paul Michael Holdsworth, LLB Hons, BA Hons. The former was formal and the latter was fun.

In the three Districts where he served it has been said that he was inspirational in his almost 24 years work in seven congregations, without a sabbatical, and work on P.E.C. and the Mission Board, was unprecedented.

The Carol Holdsworth Memorial Trust was one of his inspirations, donations to which are approximately £1,200 pounds and rising, leader of two pilgrimages to the 'not now such a Holy

Land', the pilgrimage around our Province, etc.

Please write to me, Chairman of the above for help towards Summer Camp.

Br Paul 'never gave up'. My advice, as a UK Provincial Moravian to other members is, 'be inspired', because it is necessary.

The reformed C.H.M.T. Trustees are: myself, Sr Patsy Holdsworth, Sr Claire Maxwell, Br Neil Savile, and treasurer Br Graham Mallinson.

I am again offering just one year's membership of Child Poverty Action Group, to any member inspired to eliminate UK child poverty, free.

Yours working for Christ as a Moravian,

Br Alan Holdsworth.

'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Sr Sue Selby

Sr Sue Selby is the secretary of Dukinfield Moravian Church and also known to many in the Church as the Synod Secretary, a position she has held since 2008.

Tell us about your early years, education, and family.

I was born in 1949 and lived on Old Road, Dukinfield until I was 22. My father was a Moravian for most of his life whereas my mum became a faithful and hard-working Moravian after her marriage. Rev Tom McQuillan was the minister who baptized, confirmed and married me, all in the Old Road church. As Mr Mac was a personal friend of my dad's, there never seemed to be a time when the church wasn't part of my life. Looking back, I can see that this created a good foundation to my life.

How and when did you come to faith?

My belief has grown slowly over the years, and I feel I am still learning. My parents, especially my mum, were positive influences in my life's journey and I like to think I am continuing the work they started.

Tell us about your family

I have been married to Bob for almost 52 years and we have two children, a son and a daughter, and four grandchildren. I introduced them all to the church in their early years and it is somewhat of a sorrow that none of them carried on worshipping. I live in hope that the seeds that were planted in them as children, will bear fruit one day.

What was your working life and how did you integrate your faith into your working life?

I was a secretary for the whole of my working life. My last job lasted 26 years as an administrator in a laboratory office of BP, the oil company. I like to think that my faith was reflected in my work and that I always worked with honesty and enthusiasm.

What roles have you undertaken in the Church?

As a teenager, I was a Sunday school teacher and later I helped to run a Brownie Pack, and then became Brown Owl. When Sr Dorothy Moreton became our minister in 1982, we started producing the monthly newsletter and this is something I continue to do, together with the webpage dukinfield.moravianchurch.uk. On my retirement, our Mums and Tots needed a new leader, so I have run this for 15 years now and I get endless joy from it. I have been a member of the Church Committee for over 30 years and my role as Secretary to the Congregation keeps me busy.

Have you ever been angry with God, and if so, why?

No - I have been angry with certain situations in my life but have never blamed God. He has always been a rock upon which I rely.



Are you afraid to die, or can you look beyond death? Do you believe in a resurrection, and if so, what will it be like?

I am not afraid of death, but the manner of my dying worries me sometimes. I believe that one day, I will be with my Father God in heaven and that I will be surrounded by those I loved on earth and who have gone before. It will be a place filled with love and joy where I will find an answer to all my questions, and

I will understand what I now believe by faith alone.

What can we learn from other Churches and other faiths?

always something we can learn from other people's faith and the essence of many of this world's religions are akin to Christianity. I don't believe you can 'pick and choose' what to believe in God's word. Questioning the truth of the Trinity and the Resurrection is alien to my way of thinking.

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

Sunday shopping was the start of the rot. The Sabbath is no longer holy and to me that is very sad. I do think though that people need 'something' to believe in their life and

they would find that missing link by faith in Jesus. To have children make their own decisions on church attendance and faith, is doing them an injustice. How can they know what they are missing until they have experienced it?

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

One of my all-time favourite films is 'It's a Wonderful Life' starring James Stewart. I make a point of watching it at least once a year. I truly believe that everyone is on this earth for a reason, and we should all aim to be a positive influence wherever and whenever we can.

The place where you feel closest to God?

I have a key to church and if I am particularly worried or anxious, I let myself in and just sit quietly and I feel God's presence. My worries aren't forgotten but I know I can call on God to give me the strength and confidence to carry on.

What inscription will you have on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

I hope that when I am called home, that people will remember all the daft things I've said and done and remember me with a big smile on their faces.

Finally, any major regrets and any major joys in your life?

I have no real regrets in my life. I do pray for God to put a rein on my tongue though! The joy in my life comes from my family at home and at church. My grandchildren, especially, are gifts from God.

Work of the Provincial Board

The Provincial Board are elected by the Provincial Synod. There are normally six members of the Board. Two are stipendiary, receiving the same stipend as a full-time minister, and provided with housing near Church House. The other four are non-stipendiary and are often referred to as the part-time members of the Board.

The duties of the Provincial Board are varied. According to the Book of Order, they are as follows: to administer the affairs of the British Province; to call to their several offices all persons in provincial church service; to superintend all ministers and other persons in church service; to keep in brotherly touch with all congregations; to delegate at least one of its members to attend provincial committees and district conferences; to investigate any complaint against a person in church service; to call the next meeting of the Provincial Synod; to manage the provincial officers and instruct professional agents; to give the necessary directions to the Moravian Union; to manage the school and choir house; to employ such special professional or technical advice as is necessary; to represent the British Province as a constituent member of the Unity Board; to act as the general executive of the Synod; to represent or delegate representation of the Moravian Church on inter-church committees and on ecumenical and national occasions. There are also other tasks that fall to the Provincial Board from time to time.

The main meetings of the Provincial Board are monthly, last for two days and are usually held at Church House. Other meetings are held as and when the need arises and are often held on Zoom. The Provincial Board are also supported and advised by the various provincial committees, which meet at least twice a year.

Each member of the Provincial Board has different areas that they focus on, but decisions are made collegiately. Balancing the spiritual, pastoral and financial needs of the province is not an easy task and sometimes difficult decisions must be made that not everyone in the Province will agree with. Meetings begin and end with a time of prayer as the work is committed to God and his wisdom is sought, and the Board are always grateful for the prayers and support of rest of the Province.

Being a member of the Provincial Board is both a privilege and a great responsibility. It can be demanding and stressful. It can also be rewarding and joyful. It is not for the faint-hearted or those whose focus is only on their own congregation but is for those whose heart and mind is set on the wellbeing and renewal of the whole Province, ready to serve and be served, that we might together fulfil the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Br Michael Newman
Provincial Board

British Mission Board (BMB) News

Greetings from the BMB.

Sikonge 100

We are delighted to bring news of a new project which we are endorsing and encouraging support for.

The Sikonge Mission Hospital is a faith-based hospital owned by the Moravian Church in Western Tanzania. The hospital was started in 1923 by the British missionary doctor Arthur Kievel, therefore celebrating its 100th Anniversary this year. The hospital covers an area of nearly 28,000 square kilometres mainly consisting of wild forest and small, scattered villages. Approximately 210,000 people live in this area. Many are small subsistence farmers and occasional hunger is not rare. The education level is very low, the infrastructure is bad and the journey to proper health services is long. The number of mothers dying during childbirth and children dying from treatable diseases is heart-breaking. This is the population that Sikonge Mission Hospital serves.

Sikonge Mission Hospital never rejects a person with a need for urgent treatment or medicine even if they cannot pay. The hospital's motto is 'Patient first', therefore, when urgent treatment is required the patient comes first and the



© Mia Toldam Korsgaard (Sikonge Hospital)

means to pay is considered afterwards. Many patients are therefore treated without ever being able to pay; they are exempt from payment. But the hospital's financial ability to give exemptions is limited. They wish to be able to offer treatment and medicine to every single person in need.

The exemptions follow an official and clear procedure to ensure that everybody is treated equally. It begins with a medical assessment to determine urgency. If the situation is urgent, the patient will be treated first, and the process of exemption will continue afterwards. Assessment of the patient's vulnerability

is measured by a number of factors including their level of poverty and social needs.

Social networks are also an important factor when assessing vulnerability as the extended family will, to a large extent, help each other out in times of need.

Through the assessment procedure the Hospital ensures that the programme 'catches' the poorest of the poor. This might be a widowed mother with a sick child, a poor cancer patient with a need for a big operation, or a pregnant woman from a remote catchment area who has already travelled for hours on poor transport and roads. With our help the Hospital hopes to be able to ensure that no one with a pressing need for treatment or medicine will be left without help due to poverty.

Therefore, we will be asking for support for the Exemption Programme so that we will be able to help to accommodate the great need for free treatment and medicine.

We hope that this project will be taken on by the whole of the British Province and more details will follow. If you would like to donate please send to BMB, c/o Lindsey Newens at Church House or direct to the Moravian Union (please insert bank details) marked **SIKONGE 100**.

Report on the Lancashire District Conference held via Zoom on the 11th March 2023

Opening devotions were led by Br Gubi. Sr Warr then welcomed everyone to the conference especially Br Newman representing PEC.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record. The Conference noted with sadness the death of Br Paul Holdsworth. The conference expressed their gratitude to Br Peter Gubi for organising ministerial cover until the end of June. Concern was expressed regarding Royton who had been in interregnum for nearly two years now. It was noted that the Eastern District and the Western District seem to have very good ministerial cover.

The elections were then held, and Sr Warr was elected Chair after it was agreed to hold the ballot with a show of hands as voting via Zoom did not work. The position of secretary was discussed as Sr Selby was standing down after 13 years in the role, she was thanked for the excellent job she had done during her time as secretary. Sr Margery Sutcliffe of the Fairfield congregation had been approached and she had agreed to put her name forward. She was duly proposed, seconded, and elected. Sr Sutcliffe, in future, was also willing to accept the role of Messenger Correspondent. Unfortunately, the roles

of Youth Secretary and District Safeguarding Officer were not filled. However, as each church has a Safeguarding Officer then a District Officer was not considered essential at the moment.

Br Michael Newman then presented the PEC report. He was asked about the reason for the Special Synod to be held on 17th June 2023 and he said it was to elect a new member to the Provincial Board as a postal vote was very cumbersome. The district was advised that each congregation should have its own administrator for Holy Habits. Sr Taylor had taken the administrator's role on at a district level at the moment as individual congregations felt they were not in a position to elect administrators of their own. Br Newman was asked had any progress been made with the inclusion initiative and the Blessing of same sex marriages. He said that the Faith and Order Committee was looking at an alternative liturgy. Some congregations had already voted and approved allowing the Blessings to take place at their church.

The UNESCO bid by the congregations of Gracehill, Herrnhut and Bethlehem Pennsylvania for world heritage status was discussed and if these were approved

Br Gubi wondered whether Fairfield could 'piggy-back' on this. It was agreed that this could be a mixed blessing! Br Gubi wondered whether the employment of a Grant Writer had been considered for the church?

Br Ingham said he was under the impression that an almanac was going to be produced as a separate document to the Watchwords as listings for the retired ministers and widows without any contact information was pointless. It was explained that an almanac is still in the process of being written and this will hopefully be published later on this year.

Sr Powell advised that the new official name for Royton church is now Moravian Church, Royton (formally Westwood and Salem). The change will need to be conveyed to our next Synod meeting. Br Gubi asked what was happening with the Salem building and Br Newman advised that a valuation had been done with a view to selling.

The District Gathering is to take place at Fairfield on the 25th June and the next meeting on the 14th October by Zoom. With no further business the conference closed with Grace.

Sr Janet Warr

Notices



Summer Camp Grants:

The Carol Holdsworth Memorial Trust (C.H.M.T.) is willing to offer £100 towards the cost for individual children wishing to go to Summer Camp 2023. Or if a sibling, brother or sister would like to go along with them*, then the Trust can help up to £150 towards the cost. According to how many young ones apply for Summer Camp, we may also be able to offer the latter option* to a Moravian young person and a close school friend to go with them.



Applications can be made to the C.H.M.T. by contacting Br Alan Holdsworth at:

5 Sandside Close
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD5 8QA.

From Church House

Calls

We are delighted to announce that Br Michael Newman and Br David Howarth have received and accepted Calls to serve at Fetter Lane, working in a team ministry. The Calls will take effect from Easter Sunday, 9th April 2023.

As well as Fetter Lane, Br Newman will continue to serve the Hornsey congregation, working in a team ministry with Sr Susan Quidan-Foreman. His secondment to Provincial Board duties for up to two days per week will also continue and will be reviewed in July following the Special Synod.

Br Howarth will continue as a full-time Provincial Board member. His Call to serve the Fetter Lane congregation is therefore in a non-stipendiary capacity.

Please keep Br Newman, Br Howarth, and the Fetter Lane and Hornsey congregations in your prayers during this time of transition.

Provincial Diary for May

- 4 British Mission Board (BMB) (Church House)
- 10-14 Unity Mission & Development Board (Wisconsin)
- 12-14 Worship Leaders Retreat (Crewe)
- 15-16 Provincial Board (Church House)
- 22-24 Ministers in Service Training (Swanwick)

Congregational Register

Baptisms

26th March 2023 Robyn Grace Weir University Road Belfast

Deaths

26th March 2023 Tillie Costley University Road Belfast

3	Beginning of Watchwords in Herrnhut 1728
6	Coronation of King Charles III
12	The signing of the Brotherly Agreement which marked the Renewal of the Unitas Fratrum at Herrnhut, Saxony, 1727
14-20	Christian Aid Week (www.christianaid.org.uk)
18	Ascension Day
25	Shavuot - Jewish
28	Pentecost
29	Whit Monday

Dates to remember!

Correction:

There was an error in the April printed issue of the Moravian Messenger, but not in the online version. The date in the title of Sr Shelagh Connor's obituary published on page 38 was incorrect in the printed edition: it was printed as '2003' but should be '2023'. Our apologies to all.

Cliftonville, Belfast

Bible Study on Zoom has been resumed. On 12th March, 25 adults and 9 months old Chloe Cooper made their way after church to the Cliftonville Golf Club for a very enjoyable meal and a happy time of fellowship. Three years ago, when we last met for lunch there, lockdown due to the COVID pandemic followed within a few days.

The Mothering Sunday service on the 19th March was another enjoyable occasion and we thank Sr Lorraine Gill who presented each of the ladies with a gift box containing a tube of hand cream and a floral emery board.

Br Jared Stephens represented Cliftonville and Ballinderry at the funeral of Br Paul Holdsworth on the 25th and with John Cooper attended Irish District Conference at Gracehill.

The Men's Breakfast this year was also held at Gracehill and five men from Cliftonville were able to attend. They appreciated the interesting talk afterwards by Br Roy Douglas. Br Stephens and John Cooper joined with the Gracehill Men's Group to attend the rugby match in Belfast when Northern Ireland defeated the South African Vodacom Bulls.

Passion Week and Eastertide Readings have taken place and afterwards on Maundy Thursday we shared a meal of soup and bread and cheese followed by Communion. The Cross will be flowered on Saturday and after the Easter morning service it will hang by the door of the church during the following week.

Sr Edna Cooper

Gomersal Moravian Church



© Br Philip Cooper

The building of Gomersal's church began and was completed in one year, in 1751, in Little Gomersal. The foundation stone was laid in May, and Br Johannes de Watteville consecrated the building and preached the first sermon in it in November.

However, as Br T Heywood writes in a booklet written for the bicentenary of the Gomersal, Mirfield and Lower Wyke congregations, the Moravian Church or the Brethren's Church had a large following in Gomersal before 1751. He writes that in 1742 a Lovefeast took place in a large field in Gomersal. 'Many thousands were present. The people were seated on the ground, in rows and in Choirs, each had brought provisions according to his means, and these contributions were placed on a large white cloth spread on the ground. Hymns were sung, addresses given by Spangenberg and Ingham and the Stewards of the Lovefeast distributed equally to each.' This Lovefeast began at 2pm and lasted until 6pm.

On 18th April 1755, the church became a Congregation of the Moravian Church. The communicant membership was 180, but there were many other people who lived within two miles of the church, who attended the services. The membership grew, until it peaked in 1795, at 215.

Quite early in the congregation's history, the church building proved too small. So, by 1786, two galleries were built (one for the sisters and one for brethren), the floor was also boarded and the church whitewashed. Sunday 8th October was the date when the church building was re-opened.

As well as the church building, other buildings were erected. As early as 1758 there was a girls' school. On 16th July 1758, a boys' school started, with 18 pupils. By 1762, the number of children attending the schools was 40.

A Single Sisters' House was built in 1751 and moved to another building in 1785. This was, however, too far from the settlement. So, in 1798, a Single Sisters' House was built on Lower Lane, Little Gomersal. The building consisted of three terraced houses. They ceased to be occupied by the Single Sisters in 1911 and passed out of Moravian Church hands.

In 1790 the burial ground was bought and consecrated. In 1793 the present manse was built, and, on the other side of the church, the buildings were enlarged for the Girls' Boarding School.

In 1794, the first organ was bought for the church. This was replaced with a new organ in 1868.

In 1816, the congregation began a Sunday School for girls and,

in 1820, a Sunday School for boys.

In 1868 the old church building was demolished and a new one built on the same site, with three of the walls of the old church being retained. This is the present church building. It has high windows, two porches and a belfry. The interior has one large gallery or balcony. A new organ was also purchased. The opening service took place in 1870.

Today, our weekly Sunday worship takes place at 10.30am, with Lovefeast and Holy Communion celebrated on the first Sunday in each month.

On the first Tuesday in each month, our Ladies Fellowship meets in the afternoon. The programme varies from month to month. Occasionally, there is a Guest Speaker. At other meetings, the ladies might play bingo or have a beetle drive or simply sit and chat over a cup of tea or coffee.

Also, on Tuesdays each week, we have a Rainbow group and a Guide group that meet in our Church Hall/Sunday School Hall. The local Beaver, Cub, Scout & Explorer groups join us, each year, for our Remembrance Sunday Parade Service.

On the first Wednesday morning in each month, we have a Walk for Health. This is a walk around different areas of the locality. On the second Wednesday morning in each month, we hold a Julian Prayer Meeting. This is a time of quiet reflection and prayer. On the second Wednesday afternoon in each month, our Moravian Women's Association (MWA) meets. On the third Wednesday morning in each month, we have carpet bowls.

In addition to the above regular activities, we have a variety of fundraising and social events, throughout the year, which are greatly enjoyed by all those members and friends of the congregation that attend.

We are a member of Churches Together in Cleckheaton, Spenn Valley and District, and collect food for a foodbank, based at Cleckheaton Methodist Church.

We are a very active congregation, with our 40 members and adherents contributing to the life of the congregation in varied and valuable ways.

Br Philip Cooper

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.

Editorial Team, Church House, 5 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TJ
editorialteam@moravian.org.uk

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

Design & Artwork
David Bull

dave@redragdesign.co.uk

Printing & Distribution
G. R. Walkden

Tel 01253 681338