



Christmas Eve Reflections in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

This year on December 24th, Christmas Eve, a beautiful and typical Christmas Candlelight Service will be held at the Edmonton Moravian Church.

This service brings together our congregants, their relatives and neighbors, as well as visitors from the neighborhood, who have seen the announcement on the church sign. Since we share our church with a Korean Baptist congregation, they have been invited to join us for this event.

The Candlelight Christmas Eve Service is the best attended service of the whole year. No matter what the weather we can count on good attendance in church. Here in northern Alberta, it could be as cold as minus 30 degrees Celsius with a foot of fresh snow to contend with, but the people will come.

Those who enter the sanctuary will immediately notice that the worship space has been decorated for this event. The windowsills are set with electric candles. Advent banners are hanging from the spaces between the window with the words 'Love', 'Peace', 'Joy' and 'Hope' as reminders of the topics of the Four Sundays of Advent. The bountifully decorated Christmas Tree occupies the space to the left of the chancel. Above and to the right is a very large red and white Moravian Advent Star. Christmas decorations are attached to the end of each pew.

From year to year very little changes. You can expect the pianist and organist to present a season introit of seasonal music to set the scene. Familiar carols reinforce the Christmas message.

One constant, and a distinctive part of our Moravian tradition in North America, is to distribute candles during the worship service to each person in attendance. As the candles are being distributed, the worship leader explains that the purity of beeswax candle reminds us of sinless life of Christ.

Following the passing of the candles along each pew, all will be reminded to hold the lit candle straight up as your neighbor lights their candle from yours. Members of the fire blanket brigade are at their posts as a precautionary measure.

A Children's Story often proceeds the Message which includes an invitation to the children to come forward and join the pastor

in front of the pulpit.

Finally, the lights in the sanctuary are dimmed, and the main event is about to begin: singing of Morning Star. Soloists sing a line of the hymn and the congregation responds by singing the next.

In days gone by the soloists were most often children, but over time this privilege has been shared with adults, singing duets, trios, or quartets.

As the singing of Morning Star proceeds antiphonally, the overhead lights in the sanctuary are dimmed. Gradually, as the candlelight is passed from one person to the next, light overcomes darkness - a powerful message of the hope found in the birth of Jesus.

The service concludes with the singing of 'Joy to the World'. With the singing of the final verse, candles are raised. The message of Christmas is visibly expressed again.

Every year I am deeply moved by this point in the service. I feel so connected to the whole church family through this act of repeating this faithful lighting of the candles. It tells me again that Christ is the light of the world.

Following the benediction, people linger to pass greetings on to people who they have not seen for some time and to newcomers. Despite the cold outdoors and the darkness of winter, the joy of Christmas is palpable.

Br Bill Brese
Edmonton, Canada



© Br Steven Brese



Consecration of Sr Rhoïnde Mijnaals-Doth

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In the bleak midwinter

This feels for me like the very first 'adult' Christmas I have marked in 65 years. It feels bleak and of course it will be in midwinter. Probably the last Christmas in our beloved family home of the last 12 years, surrounded by family but with that empty chair ever present. So many memories and a recognition that Christmas can be a time of grief as well as joy, of loneliness as well as companionship.

We are in a time when so many have so little in this country and many families will really struggle to put on something special just for one day of the year. Children and adults will see the false dream that is portrayed on the television and experience the reality of what can't be afforded.

In addition, the 'Holy Land' of Israel and Palestine is not a magical place of camels and sheep with stars guiding travellers from afar and kindly innkeepers offering a warm stable to a pregnant girl as depicted on our picturesque Christmas cards. Today it is a place of grief with sorrow and worry on both sides of the divide. Families are grieving, bombs have flattened whole communities, tanks bear down, and water and food are scarce. Pregnant women, just like Mary, are forced to leave their homes and safety and give birth in unsafe places without the help they should be getting. Where would our Saviour be born if he was coming to earth now? Would he be born into a Jewish family who had lost family members in the Hamas terrorist attack on the 7th October? Would he be born into a Palestinian family in Gaza experiencing the devastating attacks on by the Israeli Defence Forces. Would he be born to a new Israeli settler family in the West Bank or to a pre-existing Palestinian family who have lived there for generations? Or would he be born into

a family that is struggling in an inner city or rural poverty in our land?

And where would the angels sing and who would they sing to? To the soldiers of the IDF, to the dispossessed who have lost everything in Gaza and the West Bank, to the grieving both Israeli and Palestinian, to the olive growers, to the remnant of the Christian population of the land, to those who even now try to make and bring peace? What about to those on a picket line or those on the breadline here? I just don't know!

What I do know is that Christmas is not about happy families, presents or food, cosy advertising or easy political solutions, however lovely these things are. It is about God entering into the mess that is our world and giving us forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope. Christmas is about celebrating the fact that God sends his son, Jesus as a helpless infant to be born into a family under threat, in a disputed and occupied territory. And it is through this act that real hope comes into the world.

In light of this as we look at the world around us or even our own circumstances, we must not despair. We can join in God's gift by sharing the good news of Jesus with those around us; offer and seek forgiveness; work for reconciliation near and far; give generously to those in need; and to spread rumours of hope and whispers of love even when situations seem beyond resolution.



Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

The Editorial Team (Lindsey, Lorraine and Sarah) wish all our readers a blessed and peaceful Christmas.

End of a Year of Celebration and Recommitment in Ireland

2023 has been a special year for Irish Churches, during which there have been celebration and thanksgiving for 100 years of the Irish Council of Churches and the 50th anniversary of what became known as the Ballymascanlon Talks. The Ballymascanlon talks began in the Ballymascanlon Hotel in Dundalk and were between some of the Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church in Ireland. Over the years the relationships between the Churches have grown and developed.

The year started in January with a Service of Thanksgiving in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast for both anniversaries and it ended with a residential meeting in the Dromantine Conference Centre, Newry over the 19th-20th October. The theme for the service of thanksgiving was 'Our Reconciling Vision of Hope', and this same theme was used for the residential meeting.

The residential meeting, formally called the 'Irish Inter Church Meeting' (IICM) has developed over the years into a space for the development of relations between the churches. Those attending are representatives from across the membership of the Irish Council of Churches, members of the Catholic

Bishops Conference and lay Catholic members invited by the Bishops Conference.

Day one began with various speakers exploring the context around the Ballymascanlon Talks, including the priorities, challenges and achievements of those early years. Fr Martin Browne (Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity) noted that: 'As we celebrate 100 years of the ICC and 50 years of the IICM, we give thanks for those pioneers who took risks and endured criticism for doing what we can do so unselfconsciously today - meeting together. We give thanks that we are no longer strangers to one another, but brothers and sisters, and friends. Perhaps the hopeful vision for the future can be one of still greater closeness - the unity of Christians.' Prof. Martin Browne OSB.

The last session of the afternoon was a round table discussion for reflection on the various speakers and a vision for the future. The evening ended with a service drawn together by a Catholic priest and Presbyterian Minister, accompanied by a local choir and a Moravian was the preacher.

Day two of the conference began with Lutheran Morning Worship and then Rev

Dr Donald Watts (Presbyterian Church in Ireland) sharing the positive accomplishments of IICM and its initiatives over the years, noting that 'we are involved in a dynamic movement rather than a static structure'.

A panel then considered current challenges to our vision of a more connected Church in Ireland, as well as areas offering opportunity for closer relationships and collaboration with ICC Vice-President Bishop Sarah Groves, Rev Dr Heather Morris (Secretary of Conference for the Methodist Church in Ireland) and Dr Damian Jackson (IICM joint secretary). The last session of the morning acknowledged our failures over the past years and looked at how we might do better in coming years.

Website: www.irishchurches.org
You can follow the Irish Council of Churches on Twitter at @irishchurches

The co-chairs of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting are Bishop Brendan Leahy, Catholic Church, and Bishop Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland and ICC President.

Megan Ross, ICC Communications Officer, and **Sr Sarah Groves**, ICC Vice-President

A letter for Church Service Sunday to the members and friends of the Moravian Church - British Province

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Feelings and moods affect us all to some degree. Happiness is difficult to achieve and may come suddenly and unexpectedly, but most people are content to drift happily as long as they are not depressed or feeling sad and angry.

Anger is something that seems to be very prevalent at the time of being invited to write to you. Anger about all manner of things - but often seemingly petty and insignificant. Some we know have a continuous anger, we might call it a burning anger, which easily leads to mental health problems as they are consumed by negative thoughts. Blocking negative thoughts may help our mental health but is hard to do and uncontrolled anger soon leads to fury which then becomes rage which leads to nothing positive. I was so glad that President Joe Biden urged the Israelis 'not to be consumed by rage.'

It is recorded in all four Gospels that Jesus had occasion to be angry. And perhaps that gives us a good guide, for there are things about which we should be angry

in a positive way today. On my list I would have things like warfare and wastefulness, indifference to the needs of the poor and lonely. Racism, religious intolerance and the treatment of women in all countries. Fundamentalism and the promotion of feelings of guilt. There is need for our generation to listen to the theologians and to re-think our theology, teaching and what we believe. Change has to come and needs to come quickly for the good of the Church and its Gospel message.

I remember being angry, and being ashamed of it, some seventy years ago when the God I was trying to serve, kept reminding me that he wanted me to serve him as a minister in the church. This feeling of resentment and anger at his call continued while in the Royal Air Force until I said to God well ok I will serve you, but it will be in your strength and with your support.

I am so grateful that with God's help and the support I have had from my wife, family and friends, I have been greatly helped; and to all you Brothers and Sisters I say thank you today for helping to make my life so full and interesting.

I still believe that in the church there is a need for anger but there is an even greater need for love and all the other gifts of the Spirit as St Paul puts it in Galatians 5/22 & 23 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.'

We have had many special church campaigns and projects over the years to support and encourage the work of the Church. Project 32 is the current programme which needs wholehearted support. However, the church still needs committed people who are willing to serve as ministers. The church needs people who may sometimes be angry but who are always full of love. Men and women, who are ready to be trained, are invited to join the team of dedicated leaders who are serving the Lord in so many wonderful ways today. The need is great. Would you consider offering to serve in the ministry of the church?

All good wishes as you consider this request.

Br John McOwat
Ep. Fra. Bishop of the Unity

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

Here are the events in December:

Below is a list of events that have been sent to us for the month of December. 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 January for you in this space. Her contact details are:

claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk **Sr Claire Maxwell** PYCC

Lancashire

Sunday 10th December - Fairfield Moravian Church have a Nativity Service at 10.30am.

Sunday 24th December - Fairfield Moravian Church Children's Lovefeast and Christingle Service at 3pm.

Monday 25th December - Fairfield Moravian Church Christmas Day Service at 10.45am. Bring along a Christmas present if you want!

Every Thursday - Fairfield Moravian Church runs a Tots Time 10am-2.30pm in the College (under 4s with an adult).

London

Sunday 3rd December - Fetter Lane Moravian Church have a child-friendly family Communion at 3pm to mark the first Sunday in Advent.

Saturday 16th December - Hornsey Moravian Church has Family Lego Club from 10am-11.30am aimed at children up to 11 years old with a guardian or adult family member. Cost is £3 per child (£2 per additional sibling).

Every Tuesday in December - Hornsey Moravian Church has a warm space welcome from 1pm to 4pm with refreshments, games and puzzles. All are welcome.

Midlands District

Saturday 9th December - Ockbrook Moravian Church invites you to Coffee and Mince Pie in the Lecture Hall from 10.30am. All are welcome.

Western District

Sunday 17th December - East Tytherton Moravian Church have a Christingle service at 10.30am.

Sunday 24th December - Swindon Moravian Church have a Christingle service at 5pm.

Yorkshire

Saturday 2nd of December - Cake and Coffee morning at Horton Moravian Church from 10am-12 noon with provision for pre-school including nursery rhyme singing and drawing. Halal snacks available. All welcome. Suggested Donation £2.50.

Saturday 2nd December - From 4pm Lower Wyke Moravian Church Christmas Light Switch on and Christmas Art Competition with Prizes given.

Sunday 17th December - Lower Wyke Moravian Church Carols and Storytelling of the Christmas Story through Artwork (from the Christmas Art Competition on 2nd December) at 10.30am. All Ages welcome for this accessible service.

Every term-time Friday - Lower Wyke Moravian Church hosts Adventurers for those aged 9-13 years of age from 7pm-8.45pm. All are welcome. Subs are £1.50 each week for tuck.



Project 32: Rising Up Like the Eagle

In Project 32 we are calling the church in the British Province to become a HEALTHY church, one of QUALITY that is worth being part of, and so to become SUSTAINABLE for the duration of the 21st Century. Part of the essential foundation to achieve this is prayer. To help focus the whole province, we are organising a National Day of Prayer and Consecration for everyone to volunteer to join in meeting God and each other in this important work together. It will be on Epiphany - Saturday 6th January 2024.

Today, we want to reflect upon a powerful metaphor found in the Bible, that of an eagle. The eagle is mentioned numerous times throughout scripture, often symbolising strength, courage, and renewal.

Isaiah 40:31; 'But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.' This verse is a promise of the renewal and strength that comes from placing our hope in God.

The eagle is a magnificent creature. It does not escape the storm by seeking shelter; instead, it uses the wind of the storm to rise above it. The eagle has a unique ability to lock its wings in a fixed position which allows it to take advantage of the strong wind currents. This is a powerful metaphor for how we can approach the challenging storms in our lives.

Currently we face the challenge of renewing our church and for some of us that can feel overwhelming. But just like the eagle, we can learn to use these storms for our benefit. We can use them to rise above our current circumstances.

How do we do this? By placing our hope in the Lord. When we trust in God and rely on His strength rather than our own, we can overcome challenging obstacles. We can rise above our circumstances and soar like an eagle. As we look forward to 6th January, we want to consider CONSECRATION - setting ourselves apart for God's use, to face the storms and challenges of the future, and learning to be victorious through riding on the wind of the Holy Spirit's power and energy. Faith provides us with strength and

resilience in the face of adversity. It gives us the courage to persevere, even when the situation seems hopeless. This resilience can open up new possibilities that we might not have seen if we had given up. We commit and consecrate ourselves to persevere in God's purposes.

The eagle also teaches us about PERSPECTIVE. From its vantage point high above the ground, it sees things that are not visible from a lower level. Similarly, when we face challenges, we need to rise above them and see from God's perspective. God's perspective is always bigger than our problems. He sees the beginning and the end. He knows what we are going through and He has a plan for us. When we see from His perspective, our problems become smaller and we gain confidence to overcome them.

From now and specifically in January, we should pray for a new CLARITY of Vision - a new heavenly perspective from which we see our situation with energised faith and renewed confidence in God, which leads to HOPE.

Lastly, eagles go through a process of RENEWAL. There comes a time when they must retreat to a mountaintop and shed their old feathers. This process is painful but necessary for their survival. Similarly, there are times when we must go through a process of retreating in order to advance.

We must shed our old habits, attitudes, and behaviours that are not serving us well. This process may be painful, but it is necessary for our spiritual growth. As we renew ourselves in God's presence, we gain new strength to face the adventure of the future. Let us pray for renewal, that God will awaken and change our heart's CAPACITY - getting rid of old thinking and behaviour, with a new capability to co-operate with what the Holy Spirit is saying and doing.

In conclusion, let's prepare carefully and intentionally for building a healthy church for the 21st Century. Let us strive to be like the eagle by using this focused time of prayer to rise above our circumstances. Let us gain a new perspective by seeing from God's viewpoint. And let us go through a process of renewal so that we can grow spiritually to become a healthy church to the glory of God.

Mark **6th January 2024** in your calendar, and let's use the time to renew, gain a new perspective and build capacity for change.

Important Project 32 Dates and Activities

Prayer; contact Peter to get monthly prayer fuel to focus your prayers for Church health in our 'Church Health Energisers' prayer sheet. (peter.dornan@moravian.org.uk)

If you missed the 'Introduction to Project 32 and NCD Webinar' on the 26th October, we have the video of the session for all who would like to catch up. Use the link below - you will need the passcode.

- **URL address of the Introductory Webinar video:** <http://bit.ly/p32NCD>

Passcode: **project32!**

- **NCD Pot-Plant video:** <https://bit.ly/NCDPotPlant>

(don't need a passcode).

Church Health Surveys; through December to March, we will be approaching congregations to ask all who attend regularly to help complete a health survey. It will only take 20 minutes and can be completed online or on paper. Watch for further details.

Church Health Coaches: we are looking for more mature Christians who could help facilitate the health development process for each congregation. Training will happen shortly. If you, or someone you could recommend for this role would be interested, contact Peter Dornan or Stephen Maxwell. (stephen.maxwell@moravian.org.uk) for a job description or further information.

Holy Habits; continue to participate in our spiritual disciplines project to aid personal and corporate helpful change.

Peter Dornan
Project 32
Coordinator



National Day of Prayer and Consecration

As a British Moravian Community our request to turn to prayer on 6th of January may come for some with some mixed emotions. There will be **excitement** for those who find prayer accessible and easy; **trepidation**, perhaps, for those who struggle. There may be a wonder regarding how we can shape a whole day into prayer by those who find praying beyond a few moments at a stretch (Don't worry. I know materials are coming out shortly). There may be a **curiosity** concerning how setting aside this day may invigorate our numerically declining church.

Historically, as Moravians, we have a rich history to draw on in the way prayer has fundamentally encouraged our brothers and sisters in times when the church was at a turning point in its history. Our most prominent prayerful moment that springs to my mind has to be the unceasing prayer that began only two weeks after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on 13th August 1727 on the residents at Herrnhut. In a way, a new prayer life began for us on 27th August 1727 as it is on this day that we see the beginning of a custom of prayer that still inspires us today - that of Hourly Intercession (Fries, 89).

To undertake such a commitment the Moravians of the moment in Herrnhut must have felt this time of prayer was absolutely necessary for the furthering of God's work. It makes us wonder if even a large single church today could ever think about doing similarly to that community of Moravians at Herrnhut as it is such a commitment. People had to work together to ensure that morning and night-time was covered - a whole blanket of prayer over the workers for God at Herrnhut and in turn the world. It is truly inspiring and incredible if we take a moment to imagine the effort involved. However, I believe it is this level of dedication and the valuing of the role of prayer that in turn produces the fruit of which we are now the benefactors of - a rich and diverse church across the Unity and the British Province.

Without this focus on prayer in 1727 I wonder if we would have seen the expansion of the Moravian Church as a channel through which God's love was communicated to all across the globe. We see in the years that follow a rich missionary work emerging out of Herrnhut with the practice of the Lovefeast, another prayer-filled service, at the forefront of this endeavour.

Now, we are being encouraged to turn to prayer once more. The Moravian Church in the British Province is deliberately treading a new path as it walks this ten-year commitment to Project 32. It is a vision that requires no less dedication than the people of Herrnhut gave to their work. Our calling as a church is to ensure we are hearing and obeying what God is asking of us now as a community of Moravians. Holding this belief, I encourage us to draw on the wisdom of the past in planting ourselves firmly on the path of prayer so that we too can seek God's love and know where we are being called to channel it. This is a moment for a new chapter in our history.

I encourage us all to put 6th of January in our diaries as a day of prayer, praying as we can, not as we can't and **prioritising a day where we might be re-energised by God** through which to work God's purpose out for the coming years.

Sr Claire Maxwell
Minister at Horton and Lower Wyke
Moravian Churches

References:
Fries, A. L. (2003), *Customs and Practices of the Moravian Church*, Laughing Horse Graphics: Doylestown, PA.



Consecration of Sr Rhoïnde Mijnaals-Doth

The first woman to be consecrated a Moravian Bishop in the European Continental Province (ECP) was Sr Rhoïnde Mijnaals-Doth on Sunday 22nd October at Zeist Moravian Church, in the Netherlands. I was delighted to be invited by the (ECP) to share in this wonderful and hopeful occasion.

Sr Rhoïnde is the Moravian minister in Utrecht. She was born in Curacao, grew up in Suriname and came to the Netherlands in 1987. Here she studied theology and is involved in refugee work, among other things as chairwoman of SKIN (Samen Kerk in Nederland), an organisation of migrant communities and involved in woman's work and ecumenism.

The Church in Zeist was packed for the service as guests from all the congregations in the Netherlands and ecumenical friends gathered together. The service was also livestreamed so that members from the rest of the province could share in the day.

The consecrating Bishop was Br Theodor Clemens, and he was assisted in the consecration by Br Humbert Hessen, Br Renold Pansa from Suriname and myself. Br Theodor preached on Micah 6:8 'He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' The service included congregational singing and modern pieces, performed by a joint choir of the parishes of Utrecht and Zeist.



© Evangelischen Brüder-Unität Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine

After the consecration service there was a short break and then a Lovefeast began. The Church was so full that only buns could be served, no tea or coffee! The hymns in the Lovefeast were many and varied, old and new, some in Dutch, German, English and Surinamese and one in the language of Curacao. It was such a joyful multicultural occasion.

At the end of the Lovefeast Sr Rhoïnde and her family greeted the many guests and members of the congregation whilst the rest of us mingled and chatted to friends old and new. I loved meeting a gentleman who was so proud of his Men's Fellowship tie that he had purchased a number of years ago on a visit to British Moravian Churches. I also had the joy of meeting Br Renold Pansa again - we had last met in Suriname in 2000 during

the Unity Seminar. I have good memories of him showing us round Suriname with such pride.

Wonderful refreshments were served during this time, and no one wanted to leave! It was such a privilege to attend this consecration and I am so grateful to the ECP for inviting me to share in this.

Sr Sarah Groves
Bishop of the Unity

PYCC Fundraising for Summer Camp 2024



© Sr Claire Maxwell

PYCC, through discussion at our meeting in Belfast, planned to undertake some fundraising for our 2024 Summer Camp which will take place on Monday 29th July to Friday 2nd of August.

As a group we decided on trying to get to 100,000 collective steps over a weekend. The date set was the weekend of the 16th and 17th September with the thought being that there will hopefully be decent weather for walking.

Our team was made up of: James Woolford, Lol Wood, Alishbha Khan, Rachel Hamilton, Claire Maxwell and Joy Raynor. We had the support and prayers from our wider PYCC as we made plans amongst ourselves - ranging from walks up mountains, walks in America (James was on Sabbatical) and local parks.

As a team what motivated us can be summed up really well by Sr Lol Wood below:

'I think having been part of last year's summer camp team, it felt important to ensure that as many people who wanted to come, could come to Summer Camp 2024. The joy, laughter, experience of trying new things and new food plus the chance to make new friends is something everyone should be enabled to try.' Furthermore, I can indeed agree with her when she says, 'It made walking the mountain a lot easier thinking about all the good memories from Camp 2023.'

Lol and I got through eight Wainwrights on our Saturday walk with our Sunday steps being minor in comparison as we both had rather sore legs! Sr Alishbha did some really good steps on her park walks over both days, as did Joy in her local area. Br James was rather impressive with his commitment in the heat of America to add a solid number of steps each day. As a collective we walked a massive 116,859 steps over the weekend.

Our goal was to raise £450 as this was around the amount we spent on food for Summer Camp 2023. This then became our target figure in the hope that it would go a long way towards a healthy budget for Summer Camp 2024.

We are really overjoyed to say that to date so far we know we have raised £840 with many of you who have donated filling in tax forms that mean we are able to claim back tax. The donations have been wonderfully generous, and it has reminded us how good Moravians and friends are at offering support for Summer Camp.

Sr Joy when asked said that this fundraising is about 'enabling those who wouldn't get the opportunities to go away with young people usually to go to camp, and take part in this great Moravian event, build friendships, and relationships with the leaders - these help glue the church together' and I couldn't put it better. We are passionate as a PYCC

of trying to keep our costs low but the quality of the experience for anyone who wants to come to summer camp high. Every donation counts as it really does help us achieve this aim and if anyone reading this article wishes to still donate - please feel you are able using the details below.

I personally wish to thank the efforts of all who took part in this fundraiser but also all the generous donations. We are in the process of finding our Summer Camp 2024 'Home' but please encourage you to put the dates of Monday 29th-Friday 2nd August 2024 in the diaries of families with children ages 10-17 years old. We are really excited as a team for our 2024 Summer Camp - it will be great!

Any Sponsorship Donations are gratefully appreciated please send to:

CAF Bank

Name: **The Moravian Union**

Account: **00023436**

Sort Code: **40-52-40**

Reference: **PYCC** (This bit is key otherwise it's harder to track)

Sr Claire Maxwell
PYCC

Summary of the autumn Yorkshire District Conference held at Lower Wyke in October

The conference welcomed Br Stephen Maxwell, who gave a brief insight into Project 32 - the drive to enlarge the Moravian Church and make it sustainable for the future.

Br Maxwell, who is chairman of the project, said: 'It's not about buildings or funds. It's about people.'

Project 32 is the mission to enlarge the Moravian Church and reach out to others on the 300th anniversary of its founding.

Br Maxwell had listened as each of the Yorkshire congregations had given their individual reports to the conference. He commented: 'There is great activity in those reports' but pointed out an overall decline in congregation numbers.

He said this called for a new approach, which he likened to tending to a plant. He said: 'We know a plant needs water, so we give it water. When we want it to grow, we give it more water. But if the plant doesn't grow, do we just keep watering it?'

He said a plant needed other sources to flourish, including light, warmth and nutrients, and urged congregations to open their eyes to what was needed to enlarge their congregation.

He said the health of the church and the quality of its events were vital. He asked for concerted prayer and for coaches to come forward to help congregations achieve their goals.

Br Bob Hopcroft commented: 'We list our membership as 200 in the district but the reality is we have a much wider

outreach than the number of followers.'

In other business, delegates heard that funds from the now-defunct West Yorkshire Churches Together amounted to around £30,000 and there was a possibility this would be given to the chaplaincy at Bradford University.

Sr Kathryn Woolford asked what was happening to the buildings at Ockbrook School in Derbyshire, which has closed. Sr Jane Carter, of the Provincial Board, said protracted negotiations were continuing with a charitable company.

Fulneck School now has a new principal, Mr Devin Cassidy. The board is said to have supported the school over the last few years and the signs are said to be 'very positive'.

Baldon reported a membership of 18, with three followers. Their biggest blow came in May after the church's beer festival celebrated its 20th year. Delegates heard the festival was a great success, but three break-ins followed and in the last nearly £1,900 was stolen from the safe. To further worsen the blow, the insurance claim was rejected.

The church then received two donations of £1,000, which more than covered the loss. Money will be spent on fulfilling the recommendations of the insurers in making the church and hall more secure.

Fulneck reported a membership of 59, with two adherents. Congregation figures show an increase of five, averaging 27 per service.

Pastorally, a visiting team has been set

up to make the lesser-able still feel connected to the church. The group Who Let the Dads Out meets every third Saturday and attracts five fathers and eight children. Br James Woolford reported 'a year of stronger foundations'.

Br Philip Cooper, for Gomersal, reported 33 members and four followers, one of whom had been received into membership from another Moravian congregation. A Rainbow group and Guides meet in the church hall.

Lower Wyke has a membership of 30 and one adherent and noted 'a healthy number of children'. Monthly Cafe Church - a more informal, relaxed service - had seen the biggest growth in numbers. This year also saw the launch of the Meeting Place in Wyke, a cafe that is also a supportive drop-in centre.

Wellhouse reported 11 regular members but said a tie-in with a local dance group could attract 16 further adults as well as 16 children.

Horton has 29 members, with Sr Claire Maxwell officiating at two services a month.

For the Moravian Singers, Sr Diane Thornton said rehearsals had resumed in September and reported 'a good cohesive feeling'. Numbers had fallen to 15, so new members are welcome - and are not required to read music. Rehearsals are held at the Boys' Brigade building on Mondays.

Br Dick Porter

Heritage and Ecology at Fetter Lane

Although we are small in number, members of the Fetter Lane Congregation are the stewards of an historic site of great significance to the Moravian Church, to the residents of Chelsea in west London and to British history as a whole. Originally the home of Sir Thomas More, its ownership passed through well-known families until Count von Zinzendorf purchased it in 1750 to create a Moravian settlement.

In 2015, with the help of a conservation architect (Murray John) who had worked for the congregation before, we successfully applied for an Historic England grant to undertake a pilot project to determine the best way to repair and preserve the Grade 2 listed Tudor walls surrounding the Close and God's Acre. A few years and the first half of a pandemic later, we, led by our then Minister, Sr Claire Maxwell, began to think that any further work to make progress on the restoration and the general development of our historic asset, required special focus.

Towards the end of 2020 we held the first meeting of the

Heritage and Ecology working group. We understood that the group needed to include people beyond the small congregation; people with skills to contribute and a keen interest in the site and its long history. With the Minister as Chair, the group invites people with specific interest and perspective including Murray, and an historian with links to the Moravians, Ian Foster.

Clear boundaries for the working group are important as the working group is ultimately accountable to the Church Committee. Terms of Reference were drafted and ultimately agreed. The working group is chaired by the Minister and has a majority of Congregation members.

Together we meet regularly and have developed a management plan setting out all the areas that need attention - the walls, the roof of the stable block, the ecology of the burial ground, its place in history. Importantly, we also consider how to engage our neighbours in an appreciation of this great local asset.

Sr Cynthia Dize

Heritage Day at Fulneck



© Paul Clarke

The theme for 2023's Heritage Day at Fulneck was 'Love, life and labour'. Ably organised by Myra Dickinson with support from her Heritage Day team, there was a wealth of information from our archive, beautifully displayed in Church and in Fulneck's Museum.

Visitors were taken on guided walks around the settlement by knowledgeable guides in period dress describing what life was like for Moravians living in Fulneck in the late 1700s. Actors from the Church's drama group took on the roles of two inhabitants of Fulneck; Rosina Anderson and Richard Edwards. Rosina was the single sisters' labouress - who organised the single sisters and looked after their welfare. The other was Richard Edwards, Fulneck's always busy shoemaker.

Meanwhile, the café was doing great business, providing tea, cakes and sandwiches for hungry Heritage Day visitors.

For the first time, Fulneck's Classic Car show ran on the same day. It proved to be a tremendous success; visitors to the car show also taking a look around the Settlement and visitors to Heritage Day also having a look around a fantastic array of cherished vintage cars. The combined efforts of both events raised a fantastic £1,500.

Br Dave Robbins

'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Br Derick Woods

Br Woods is a member at University Road Moravian Congregation in Belfast. Derick recently marked 50 years as a Lay Preacher in the Moravian Church. He was Principal of Annadale Grammar School and then Principal of Wellington College, Belfast. Derick has also served on the Provincial Board from 1994 to 2002 and was Chair of Governors at Fulneck School 1994 to 2003.

Tell us about your early years, education, family background

I was born in Belfast in April 1939 to gentle, loving parents. My father, Stafford worked in the Belfast shipyard. My mother, Rita was a housewife. During the war years I hardly saw my father because of the war effort he had to work extra shifts. I started school in Rosetta Primary and, at 11, I moved to the newly opened Annadale Grammar School - little did I know the influence it would have on my later life. After there I studied Mathematics at Queen's University, and some years later I took another degree at the Open University.



© Br Livingstone Thompson

When I was 8 years old, my aunt died. Her last wish was that my parents should raise my 9-year-old cousin, Irene. So, in May 1947 I got a new big sister, who became a nurse and has been a great blessing to me.

How and when did you come to faith?

Coming to faith was a gradual process starting when each Sunday I was taken by my parents to the University Road Moravian Church and sat beside my grandfather. I became a choirboy in a Church of Ireland choir from the age of seven to nearly 13 years old. As I lived too far from the church to attend the afternoon Moravian Sunday School, I went to the local Methodist one and joined their Boys Brigade company becoming an officer. In my teenage years I was greatly influenced by our minister, Br Hugh Mellows. My faith grew as I prepared BB Bible Class talks and dashed from the Methodist Church to be at the Moravian Church for morning service.

Tell us about your own family

I have been very happily married to Marian for over 56 years. We met in Methodist College, Belfast where Marian taught Physics and I taught Maths. We had two children. Sadly, aged 31, our son, Colin, died of SUDEP (Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy). Our daughter, Sandra, who is Head of Nuclear Medicine in Northern Ireland, is married to John and they have a daughter, Ruth. Sandra is on the Church Committee and runs the Sunday School in University Road.

How have you integrated your faith into your role as an educator?

As a teacher and a Principal, I hope that I have shown the 'fruits of the Spirit', which Paul wrote about in Galatians 5 v 22 & 23.

What roles in the Church have given you most satisfaction and what have been the real challenges?

I have had virtually every role except being a minister. Being a PEC member gave me both satisfaction and presented real

challenges when visiting and working through the problems of the congregations and schools in the province.

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

No! Not even when Colin died. I believe that because of his faith and life that he was in a better place in the presence of God.

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?

No but, as it gets closer, it is the death process which I dread. I live in hope of a resurrection which will be in better place than this world.

What can we learn from other Churches?

I was once challenged by two senior Baptist pupils, who did not agree with my ecumenical assembly talk. During a lunchtime discussion, I asked them 'Do you believe that God has revealed all truth to the Baptist Church, because I do not believe he has revealed all truth to the Moravian Church or any other church. We have to learn from each other.' We can learn commitment to love and service to all from our own and other churches.

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

The hypocrisy of some, who call themselves Christians, and recent church scandals. The church is now portrayed by the media as irrelevant to modern life. It is seen as stuffy and boring compared with other activities which are available.

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

My favourite film is 'The Sound of Music' as it was the film Marian and I saw on the day we got engaged. This made us decide on Austria for our honeymoon and for very many happy family holidays. I read in bed at night, usually thrillers or detective stories. Marian and I are patrons of the Ulster Orchestra and attend all of their concerts, so classical music is my favourite although I do like musicals having appeared in a few and choral music (I have been in choirs since the age of seven).

The place where you feel closest to God?

Sitting in the quietness of our empty church or when preparing a service.

What inscription on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

I will leave that for others to decide.

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

I regret spending too much time with politics in 1960s. I get great joy meeting former pupils and hearing of their successful achievements.

New Principal at Fulneck School



It is a great honour to have been appointed as Principal of Fulneck School and I really do mean it! I have spent the last 30 years in education, the last six years of which have been as a Head of Senior Boys at a large 3-18 diamond model school in the Northwest of England where I was also the Vice Principal of the whole school. My roots are in pastoral care, having served for many years as a Deputy Head and Second Master with safeguarding as one of my key responsibilities.

Upon walking through the door on the first day of my interview, I knew I had arrived at a very special school indeed. The warmth of the people, the care for the pupils and the stunning setting convinced me that I really wanted this job. This is a school where children really do matter and are genuinely cared for and their needs are of paramount importance. Now many schools make this claim but at Fulneck there is no doubting the authenticity of this claim. I have seen in my short time here, the impact that Fulneck has on the lives of children. The school is a rich mix of pupils

from varied backgrounds and nationalities which results in the school being truly global in its outlook and although the school is small it is far from being small minded.

There is a special calm about the school which is rare in schools. The calm is indicative of purposeful teaching and from the lessons I have visited already I can say with conviction that the lessons are pacy, interesting and full of pupil participation. There is a genuine desire to treat all pupils as individuals and all pupils are known well. And most importantly they feel cared for. I recently met with each member of Year 11 to discuss post 16 options and asked them if they genuinely felt they had someone they could speak to in school if needed and if they would be prepared to do so and there was no hesitation from any of them to confirm there was; this is not the case in every school I can tell you!

So, my hope is that I can bring Fulneck my experience to skilfully take it on its way to the next chapter in its great history without losing what is so special

about the school: the calm and the genuine family feel.

I am married to Kathryn (a Police Officer) and have two grown up daughters who are pursuing their professional careers, Zara is a Midwife and Ella is a Police Officer; I suppose a sense of public service runs in the family!

Acutely aware of the importance of education within the Moravian Church, I look forward to many years of service to Fulneck School and very much hope the school is already enjoying the change that I am bringing which I hope will strengthen the school in every area and sustain education for many years to come at this stunning campus.

Devin Cassidy
Principal of Fulneck School

Lancashire District Conference Spring Meeting

The meeting was held on Zoom on the morning of 14th October. All three churches in the district were represented and Sr Roberta Hoey attended as PEC representative.

Prior to Br Peter Gubi's call to serve at Fairfield and Royton, the congregation at Fairfield had a year in interregnum. Br Peter paid tribute and expressed gratitude to the Church Committee, chaired by Sr Janet Warr, who he said had done a sterling job in keeping things going so efficiently during the interregnum. He also thanked the Worship Leaders who have offered spiritual input during that time. He already feels settled and has an office in 'The College' and the manse is rented out.

The Moravian Church at Royton (to give it its new name in full) have gone through a long two-year interregnum and expressed their joy at welcoming Br Peter. They wished to express their gratitude to the many Lay Preachers who had supported them and the five ministers who celebrated Holy Communion with them. During the year ending 31st August 2023 they have welcomed into membership most of the members from Salem. Br Peter expressed his concern that the members at Royton may be neglected as Fairfield was taking up so much of his time, but he was reassured that this was not the case.

Dukinfield were happy to welcome Sr Patsy Holdsworth in September. Sr Patsy expressed her thanks for the warm welcome she has received there.

Lancashire district still feel that overall, we are short of support in terms of ministry. The three churches have a total of 127 members. Sr Hoey said PEC were aware of this, as their original

intention had been that Lancashire district would have three ministers, further discussions would be held regarding this. In the meantime, Br Peter and Sr Patsy will collaborate so that congregations can share things such as Bible Study, Prayer, Advent and Lent groups to mitigate the workload for each church.

It was felt that the district gathering on the 25th June had been a good and enjoyable service and therefore it was agreed to hold another on 30th June (provisionally) at Fairfield at 10.30am.

The district is still without a youth coordinator, but we are still hopeful of filling this role in the coming months.

The PEC report had been distributed previously; a discussion was held on the progress of Project 32. Conference was advised of Prayer Day on 6th January and resources will be sent out in the coming months. Summer camp had been a great success and plans are afoot for next year's camp. Sr Hoey was asked about progress on the sale of Salem, there had been an unforeseen delay due to a restriction put in place by the council in the 1980s, however it was now expected that the site would be listed for auction soon.

South Asia is now a mission province (previously a mission area), which means they now have the responsibility to call ministers to service and they will hold a synod and have a Provincial Board.

Our next meeting will be on 9th March 2024.

Sr Margery Sutcliffe
LDC correspondent

Fetter Lane, London:

'Awesome Autumn' afternoon for children at Moravian Close

The Fetter Lane Congregation wanted to do a children's activity during the autumn half term, with our friends at the local Salvation Army, Phil and Abby Howe. We settled on an 'Awesome Autumn' afternoon. Approximately 28 children came, together with their carers so we had over 35 in all. Luckily it was a fine day, so the children started with a treasure hunt in the Close, led by Br Michael and Phil. Then everyone came into Studio 1 for leaf craft, gingerbread people decorating, Lego, and floor toys for smaller children. The children then happily settled down with a fruit snack and drink, to watch a puppet show from Phil, followed by a story from Abby, and finally some action songs. It was a great afternoon, hard work, but much appreciated by the carers.

A lot of work went into the planning, and publicity, it really helped having the benefit of the Salvation Army contacts, and our own contacts with the local pre-school and Primary school. Many people who had never been into the Close before enjoyed our green space. It was also great to further our fairly new relationship with our Salvation Army friends by doing this joint activity - we now have ideas for further events!

Sr Naomi Hancock



Here is Abby telling her 'lost sheep' story, backed up by pictures on TV!

© Sr Naomi Hancock

Fulneck, Yorkshire

Alongside our regular worship, summer and autumn at Fulneck have seen a plethora of events at Fulneck. In June, Fulneck Former Pupils ran their regular Summer Reunion. July saw the Congregation covering its allotted 24 hours of prayer and reflection for Unity Prayer Week. We also took part in Leeds Year of Culture with two events: a well-attended recital by internationally renowned organ scholar, Dr Gordon Stewart and Fulneck Dramatic Society performed 'Be my Baby' at the Comenius Arts' Centre.

Sport was also on the agenda (well, kind of) with a Wimbledon Garden Party taking place on Henman Hill (aka the Choir House and Terrace). Blessed with a decent day, attendees enjoyed strawberries and cream and Prosecco. Thanks to Fulneck's 'Soul Sisters' for this.

As life returned to normal after the traditional August hiatus, our Minister James Woolford started a three-month sabbatical. We wish him well and look forward to his return, refreshed and with renewed vigour, after his time away.

One of the features of the autumn season has been a series of excellent organ recitals by Peter Siney, Charles Edmundson (a former Fulneck School pupil) and Emeritus Professor Graham Barber. They've gone down well, and it is hoped that similar events can be organised in the New Year.

In September we celebrated Harvest Festival. In October, The Brethren's Festival, led by retired minister Trevor Auty took place. The following weekend a highly successful 'Autumn Fayre' was held.

As the evenings get darker and temperatures head downwards, winter activities are back on the agenda. The Craft Group are back in session; the Drama Group in rehearsal for a production of George Bernard Shaw's 'Pygmalion' and a professional theatre company have booked a two-week residence at the Comenius Centre to perform the pantomime 'Cinderella'.

Before we know it, the Christmas Tree Festival will be with us and preparations in the making for Christmas 2023.

Br Dave Robbins

Swindon, Wiltshire

As we approach the end of the year and look forward to what 2024 has in store, we also look back with gratitude over 2023 and our first year of Sr Jane's ministry.

The year started with a funeral, a confirmation and a baptism. We thank Sr Jane for supporting us through these highs and lows, including the shock news of Br Paul Holdsworth's passing.

Our Wednesday group has been busy throughout the year, preparing and sorting items ready to be packed into Christmas shoeboxes. These are now being filled, ready to be shipped to Eastern Europe.

group has grown in size to 25 girls, so we now run two groups and have welcomed four new leaders plus numerous girls volunteering for their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

We have continued to meet monthly to explore together 'Holy Habits', including a fish and chip supper whilst discussing eating together.

Our congregation outing to South Cerney for a BBQ and games was a rather wet day, but we enjoyed a good day of fun and fellowship, ending with a very wet trip on a pedalo.



© Sr Sandy Mundy

The church was open for the Historic churches Ride and Stride Day with numerous visitors arriving for a look round, a chat and a cuppa. A collection for the local food bank was made at our Harvest Festival service, with donations from the congregation and the Rainbows.

Last month, we had a porridge breakfast prior to morning service, which raised money for Mary's Meals (a charity bringing vital school meals to some of the world's most vulnerable children). After worship, we held our council meeting, making plans for moving forward into 2024 and beyond.

Earlier this month, we held a quiz night which was a lot of fun with some friendly rivalry. It brought in many new faces and raised over £200 for Fearfree, a charity helping people affected by domestic abuse.

We have also been out and about with our travelling tombola raising funds for SSNAPP (support for the newborn and their parents) Oxford.

Our Rainbows have been learning about Remembrance Day and created a display for the church doors.

Sr Sandy Mundy

University Road, Belfast

Morning worship on Sunday 5th November was a particularly joyous time at University Road. On that occasion we received into membership Beth Kocher Gormley and welcomed to church and Sunday School her two daughters Grey and Freya. Sr Beth has been a member of the Palmer congregation in Pennsylvania, USA, but is now living in Ireland. We are delighted to have her and her family with us at University Road.



Sr Beth with Br Len and Sr Sheila Broadbent

© Br Livingstone Thompson

On 5th November we also welcomed to worship Br Johnny and Sr Kim Speers. Johnny and Kim have been lifelong members of our congregation and, although they have lived in Canada for many years, are frequent visitors to University Road. It was so good to see them meeting up with old friends and acquaintances, especially some they had not seen for a very long time, and to hear their recollections of times past and mutual friends. Sr Thomasina Miller was certainly surprised when at Holy Communion she discovered that she was sitting next to Johnny Speers, who she would have known from Sunday School days, and had not seen in decades. The exclamations of surprise and pleasure were truly a joy to behold!

This time of fellowship really reinforced for all of us the love and the bonds which we share and enjoy in our church family.

Sr Carol Ackah

Come and step aside for a weekend of faith, fellowship and fun

FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND AT CORRYMEELA. Ballycastle, on the North Antrim Coast in Northern Ireland Friday 9th-Sunday 11th February 2024

Good food with friends, faith and sessions led by Rev Dr Jill Vogt who will share with us her discoveries about the Moravian tradition of Lebenslauf and its relevance for our lives today. Jill is the co-pastor of the Herrnhut Moravian Congregation in Germany.

The weekend is organised by the Irish District of the Moravian Church but is open to anyone associated with the Moravian Church. We will arrange transport from airports for folk coming from England.

There will be an opportunity to explore the local area or just to relax with the wonderful views over to Rathlin Island. Corrymeela has a special place in the story of reconciliation in Northern Ireland: www.corrymeela.org

Cost is £150 per person for a 2 or 3 shared bedroom and £200 for a single room. This includes all meals from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. Booking forms will be out shortly but for more information contact Sarah Groves on: sarah.groves@moravian.org.uk or 07950898331.



FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Sr Sue Groves will be commissioned as a Lay Pastor at Brockweir on Sunday 7th January at 3pm.

Christmas

Church House will be closed from Friday 22nd December to Tuesday 2nd January.

The Provincial Board and all the staff at Church House would like to extend Christmas greetings to our brothers and sisters in the British Province and our partners in South Asia and Western Tanzania. We hope that it is a time of blessing, surrounded by the love and peace that was given to us through the humble but remarkable coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also look forward to ringing in the New Year. May 2024 be filled with hope and inspiration as we continue our journey together.

Provincial Diary for December

13-14	Provincial Board	Church House
19	Mission & Society Committee	Online

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Baptisms

20th Aug 2023 Theo Simon Macartney
University Road Belfast

22nd Oct 2023 Rory George Lewis Nelson Fairfield

Received into Membership

15th Oct 2023 Christopher Shorten Bath Weston

5th Nov 2023 Beth Kocher Gormley
University Road Belfast

5th Nov 2023 Peter Madsen Gubi (Snr) Fairfield

Deaths

25th Aug 2023 Susan Angela Ellwood Fairfield

1st Sept 2023 Anthony Carr Fairfield

8th Oct 2023 Anne Brown Cliftonville Belfast

1	World Aids Day (www.worldaidsday.org)
3	First Sunday of Advent
	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
10	Human Rights Day (www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/)
18	International Migrants Day (www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/)
7-15	Hanukkah - Jewish
21	Winter Solstice
25	Christmas Day
31	New Year's Eve /Watchnight

Dates to remember!

British Mission Board (BMB) News:

Congregation Worship in South Asia



This month the BMB brings you a flavour of some of our congregations in South Asia including Nepal, Ladakh and New Delhi. As we meet for our Sunday services, in Nepal they have already met on the Saturday which is their Sabbath. In India the time difference is generally 4.5 hours ahead. A variety of music can be experience including worship groups. The sanctuaries are generally well carpeted, and the congregation sits on the floor. As you can see from the photographs it is not always warm in India and Nepal, you have to wrap up! Please remember our brothers and sisters in Christ as you meet for your services and share fellowship.



Shey, Ladakh



Khokona, Nepal

© Sr Jane Carter



Khalatse, Ladakh



New Delhi Fellowship

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