

moravian messenger

JANUARY 2024



© Sr Jane Carter

Consecration of Sr Christine Emanuel

On Saturday 18th November 2023, I was among those who attended the Consecration of Sr Christine Emanuel. I would like to join others in congratulating Sr Christine on her Consecration as a Presbyterian. I felt privileged to have attended this event. The service was held at Hornsey Moravian Church, followed by light refreshments. The food served was multi-cultural and plentiful, and this lovefeast provided an opportunity for fellowship of those who attended, which helped to cement the sense of unity.

The service was well attended by Bishops, Ministers, members of other congregations, friends, and families. The Church's atmosphere was filled with joy and anticipation, and I hope those who followed the service via YouTube, all felt the same. One thing I like about Moravians is, that, we are all brothers and sisters regardless of one's role or position in the Church.

The Consecrating Bishops were Bishop Sarah Groves, Bishop Joachim Kreuzel and Bishop John McOwat. Rev Philip Cooper and Rev Jane Carter gave the sermon during this occasion. Sr Carmen and Br Christoher members of Harold Road Congregation, and a family member of Sr Christine took part in reading lessons chosen for the occasion and presenting a bible to Sr Christine.

I have been reflecting on the sermons by Rev Philip Cooper and Sr Jane Carter. They amongst other things highlighted two of Sr Christine's many gifts, listening and organisational skills. I could not agree more. Quoting an American author Stephen R

Covey, 'The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand, we listen to reply'. Sr Christine listens to understand. I pray that God will continue to use Sr Christine as a source of encouragement, support, and inspiration to each member, not only at Harold Road congregation but also other congregations.

Harold Road congregation is one of the smallest in the British Province. However, members have remained committed to ensure that, the congregation does not extinguish. I would like to invite everyone within and outside the British Province, to continue to pray for the sustainability and expansion of our congregations, with God nothing is impossible, Luke 1:37.

To conclude, I would like to pay a tribute to Sr Christine for her commitment in working in God's vineyard. I thank God for her life. Hebrews 6:10, one of my favourite

scripts for a faithful servant of God. 'God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love that you have shown to His name in having ministered to the saints and still continue to minister'.

Good wishes to all for the New Year 2024.

Br Christopher Mwaisango
Harold Road Congregation



Rev Basil Rogers
(1936-2023)

(page 3)



Centenary celebrations at Sikonge Mission Hospital

(page 4)



My understanding of my art therapy experience

(page 6)

There is something about January that just lifts my spirit. It can't be the weather because it is often colder than December and it can't be my bank balance which is often rather bare post-Christmas. So, I can only put it down to the slowly lengthening days and the promise of the snowdrops flowering up Sisters Walk in Gracehill. When we lived in Baidon there was an almond tree, on the way to Baidon Bank, that was always in flower in the depth of winter, and it was such a promise of spring coming. I am sure that many of you will have a similar talisman plant or tree that points to spring and lifts your heart.

So I, like so many of us, look for those glimmers of hope and promise that we see with the turning of the year. We need the tangible signs that winter is moving along and the reassurance that nothing stays cold and dark for ever. The words of God from his throne in Revelation 21:5 'Behold I make all things new' find an echo in nature as the world wakes up again into a new year.

There are times when we feel, as a denomination, tired, old (not surprising as we date from 1457!) and worried about our future. Is our Church only to grow and develop in other parts of the world and just quietly retreat here? Can new life be breathed into our old structures? Or does the future hold no space for the smaller Churches like ours?

It is at this point that I believe we should hold onto the recognition that God can and does 'make all things new'. We are in the beginning phases of Project 32, and we have just had our Day of Prayer (Saturday 6th January) in

congregations and as individuals praying for God to renew us and revive us. God does have purposes for his people even when they seem to be in the most desperate of situations. Jeremiah writes the words of the Lord to the tragic generation who have been taken into exile in Babylon and the Lord says in Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the plans I have for you', declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'

Of course, we need to recognise that God's plans for us may not be our plans for us and our congregations! That is always a risk when we seek to follow God faithfully and we need honestly to be prepared to accept that risk when we pray. What will God's renewing mean for us personally and corporately and are we prepared for a much deeper level of commitment?

I imagine that many of us will have entered this new year with many questions about how the year will pan out for us personally and for our families, work and communities. But I also pray that the Holy Spirit, will guide us as a Church into the future that God wants for us and give us wisdom and strength to follow that prompting and set our feet firmly on any new path he calls us too.

May you know God's guiding presence with you each and every day this year.



Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

Rev Basil Rogers

(1936-2023)



© Stuart Rogers

Basil was born on 27th April 1936 and 87 years of hard work, service, love and a lot of laughter began. Born to Charles and Edith and with a brother Alan in Tisbury Wiltshire, he attended Gillingham Grammar School.

Baz worked hard at school, kept his head down and enjoyed school, and achieved A grade qualifications in Mathematics and Physics. Somewhat of a surprise to everyone was to find that he passed a qualification in mechanics, which is strange, for anyone who knew Basil they would know that he didn't know one end of a spanner to the other.

On 10th July 1957 he achieved his Bachelor of Science degree from Bristol University. And then on the 11th August 1962 Basil and Diana were married in Fovant Chapel. Not long after, Cheralyn and Stuart came along. Sadly, Diana died in 2004.

Baz's teaching career at Hengrove School spanned many years. Mathematics was his chosen subject during which time he taught several well-known Bristol City players and even helped the great footballer John Atyeo retrain as a teacher. Later he was to become a respected deputy head and in his last year he acted up as head.

At some point he managed to squeeze in a year of National Service based in Germany. One thing that many people remember him for is his unwavering support of the Boys Brigade over many years as chaplain and regular attendee at Battalion camps. Baz also loved playing cricket.

In his early fifties, the opportunity presented itself to take early retirement from a teaching career. And on 6th July 1984 he was ordained into the United Reformed Church to become an auxiliary minister. He was to later become a non-stipendiary minister at Whitfield URC and was later instrumental in merging this together with the Moravian Church to form the United Church, Kingswood. He would later go on to be a faithful servant to other Moravian Churches, not least in Bath, not forgetting that along the way he spent periods helping URC churches in Thornbury, Argyle Morley and Bedminster to name a few.

Throughout Baz's life, as well as being a lay preacher, an ordained minister, an elder and all-round solid servant to the Church, perhaps his greatest service was in taking funerals. He took this role very seriously and delivered extremely

personalised services. The funeral directors were especially grateful to him as he occasionally conducted as many as seven funerals in one day. He worked until he was 83 years old.

Baz was incredibly generous, both with his time and his resources. He loved to take the wider family on holidays. It was not unusual for all 11 family members to visit different parts of the world. The family built up a special affinity with the Gambia, helping a local family to establish a tour company. Baz even bought them a land rover.

A huge part of Basil Rogers' personality was his humour. The absolute master of funny faces. When he laughed, his whole body laughed. When he sang, the whole world heard him and sang with him. When he preached, everybody listened. When he prayed, everybody was blessed.

The reading chosen for Baz's funeral was Matthew 25:13-46. This parable of the three servants showed many of Baz's attributes very well. Baz didn't bury his good works, he stepped out of his comfort zone. He reached out to help people, to show them the face of Christ. Baz was bold and brave and cared deeply for all he met. Baz was a good and faithful servant.

Throughout the parable of the sheep and the goats we hear the phrase, 'whenever you did (or didn't) do this for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did (or didn't) do it for me'. To serve one another is indeed to serve God, because each of us is made in God's image. This parable describes the two great commandments: love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength; and love your neighbour as you love yourself.

There is only one message here, the commandment to love, and real love is always shown in action. That is something that Baz did in spades. He served and loved without asking for anything in return.

He loved his family, his friends, his students, his congregations. He would go out of his way and step out of his comfort zone to show the love of Jesus.

Love in action, that is how one would describe Baz, thank you for showing us how to love.

Stuart Rogers (son) and Sr Lorraine Shorten
(Minister at Bath Weston and Bath Coronation Avenue Moravian Churches)

Br Basil was a wonderful example of an honest and upright Christian gentleman. I first met Basil in his role as the Deputy Head of a school which, in the early 1980s, was considered 'progressive'. He was an impressive figure long before he became a Moravian Minister, a colleague, and a friend. Basil reached out with a friendly hand. He drew people in. He was a thoroughly likeable person. We smiled together when he shared that he wasn't a native of Somerset which was an adopted county for both of us. Basil was at home wherever he hung his hat, and, of course, he hung it firmly on a Moravian peg.

Basil and I shared a firm commitment to Ecumenism. It came from the moving of the Holy Spirit in our ministries. Living and working in Kingswood, Bristol we were aware of the work of men like Whitefield, Wesley and Cennick. They were our inspiration, and Basil was an inspiring man. Basil and I both believed that there was a genuine movement of God's Spirit at that time, and it was about exploring the needs of declining congregations in the UK when there was growth in the Church world-wide. Surely the real meaning of Oecumenical?

Now we, who knew him, have lost Basil. And those of you who are reading this, who didn't know him, now know that you have been deprived of fellowshiping with a truly good man.

Basil Rogers transcended denominational boundaries and their nomenclature. He was a man of God and for a few short years he was my friend. Thanks Basil, it's been a pleasure and a privilege knowing you.

Br Trevor Auty

SAVE
the
DATE

15th February 2024 @ 7.30 pm

**MORAVIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND
HISTORY AND HERITAGE SOCIETY
PRESENTS**

**THE INAUGURAL
COOPER LECTURE**

**SPEAKER:
REV. DR. CRAIG D. ATWOOD**

**THE CHARLES D. COUCH CHAIR OF MORAVIAN THEOLOGY
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR MORAVIAN STUDIES**

Available on ZOOM. Please book on Eventbrite

<https://cooperlecture.eventbrite.co.uk>



© Br David Howarth

Centenary celebrations at Sikonge Mission Hospital

Saturday the 21st of October was a special day in Sikonge, Western Tanzania, as there were celebrations for the centenary of the hospital started by Doctor Keevill. Br David Howarth represented the PEC, and we both represented the British Mission Board, me being a co-opted member. I first spent three months in Sikonge in 1982 as part of my medical training and felt it was a real honour to return in an official capacity. The day before the celebrations David and I spent the whole day in Sikonge and saw many areas of progress. I will concentrate on the hospital and the many improvements we witnessed. The one thing that has not changed in the Mission Hospital is worship to start the day at 07:30. If staff do not attend this, they must begin work so people of all faiths and those of none tend to go to the service!

The old operating theatre where I had assisted 41 years ago has now two dental chairs and two dentists - this is progress indeed as there was no dental provision at all in 1982. There was a functioning X-ray machine and two ultrasound machines. One of these was very good and could be used to image the abdomen and the heart. In outpatients, which really is a mix of GP problems and A&E ones, there is a form of very simple examination of each patient as they arrive to assess how urgent their problem is (triage). There is one emergency room but as it is not in constant use equipment may need to be obtained from the wards. The laboratory can now analyse vials of blood just as in the UK and look at a slide

down a microscope for malaria parasites. There is a stock of blood for transfusions that is obtained from the nearby government hospital.

There are new medical, surgical and children's wards with a central nurses' station with Nightingale wards for male and female patients. All the beds have bed nets to help prevent malaria. Oxygen - there was none in 1982 - can be given via concentrators: this is common in Africa. There are also two private rooms with en-suite facilities if patients elect to pay for these facilities. There is a new child health and anti-natal department. There is provision for HIV/AIDS treatment in outpatients and also in a separate government run building on the site. The laundry is done by hand and dries in the sun. There are disposable gloves rather than the washed one we used in 1982. There are many large vessels of water for staff and patients to wash their hands and liquid soap is used.

There is an excellent new (2019) physiotherapy department with up-to-date equipment and a section that makes prosthetic limbs. We saw one being worn at the home for the last few patients with leprosy who have no one to care for them and it was certainly very lifelike, so much so that I tapped it to make sure it was not a real leg!

You will be aware that to celebrate the centenary of the hospital a fund is being set up to assist those patients who find payment difficult. The hospital has just begun to put this into practise. Their policy states the goal is: 'as a Mission

Hospital we want to offer treatment and medicine to every single person in need. No one in need of treatment should leave Sikonge Mission Hospital without getting help due to the lack of ability to pay'.

The policy is based on those of several other mission hospitals. The patient is screened, after treatment if they are very ill, as to whether they need help with payment or provision of food. A social worker does the initial screening, and the doctor determines how urgent the care is. Children under five, pregnant women and those with some specific diseases get some treatment free. Two members of the hospital management team consisting of the senior doctor, matron and chaplain authorise the exemption, though this falls on the senior nurse if it is out of hours. The social worker also helps patients by explaining their treatment and how to take medication when they are leaving. He can help with local languages if the patient has not understood the doctor or nurse. It was interesting to see how wealth was assessed using possessions such as livestock, land, a house, a radio or TV; occupation; means of transport such as by foot, bicycle, motor scooter, ox-cart or bus; and also the patient's physical appearance. Social networks are important and people who attend social gatherings such as funerals will be helped by family and friends. Some are vulnerable as they may be addicted to alcohol or be subjected to domestic violence and so may not be able to pay for their care. The policy also applies to the seven outlying clinics but if the

hospital cannot offer the care needed it does not apply in the government total in Tabora. The very poor therefore may not go to Tabora even if this is advised as they will not be able to get there nor afford the treatment.

Two cases will illustrate the way the policy works:

- A 37-year-old man was involved in a road accident. He had a badly broken leg and no money. There is no orthopaedic doctor in Sikonge so he needed to go to Tabora. He could pay later so was given a temporary exemption and taken to Tabora in an ambulance car with two other patients. The hospital in Sikonge will be paid for their part of his care later.
- A child came with a fever that had been going on for four or five days. The child arrived after a motorcycle ride of two hours and the mother had left four other children at home. They were from a poor tribe and lived very traditionally so in this case even if the child was over five years, they may get an exemption of hospital fees.

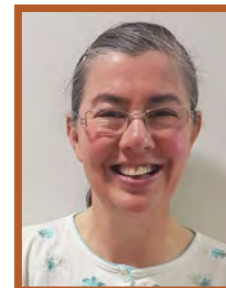
A traditional healer may also be used at times and even in conjunction with modern hospital medicine. This can make the patient's care more difficult.

Thus, this policy and assessment is used so that the hospital's motto of 'patient first' can always be fulfilled.

Celebration of the centenary or jubilee was an uplifting experience with worship around the commemorative monument that the bishop unveiled and then a five-hour service with many choirs participating, including the hospital choir with their commemorative T-shirts that say 'be servants to one another in love' from Galatians 5 v13. Br Howarth and I gave greetings and Br Jørgen Bøytler preached in Kiswahili, but he had given us English translations.

It was a wonderful experience to see many new developments and celebrate with staff, clergy, villagers, and patients something that had begun in mud huts a century ago.

Sr Claire Summers
British Mission Board



New year, New plans for Project 32 and your Congregation...

Happy new year Sisters and Brothers - I hope you are as excited as I am to dive back into the business of growing our church this year!

A lot of progress has been made by Project 32 during 2023, including the hiring of the Project 32 Co-Ordinator (Peter Dornan), a stocktake of the position of every congregation, the delivery of the Holy Habits programme, and the preparations of the next phase of our work - the Natural Church Development (NCD) programme.

Moving into 2024 Project 32 will be moving into a new phase of activity, with the focus being on building the sustainability of our church and the health of our congregations. For you as members of congregations there will be ample opportunities to participate in this work and help ensure that your congregation will still exist in 2032.

As such, we will be launching the NCD surveys in January. As we have mentioned previously, the NCD survey will involve up to 30 people from your congregation being asked to fill out a short online survey. The results will be analysed and give your congregation a picture of where your strengths and weaknesses are as a church community. As a congregation you will then be asked to meet with a NCD Coach, who will help you to understand the analysis and be on hand to guide you in developing your congregation's Development Plan. You will then focus on strengthening the weaknesses of your congregation which, over time, will make our congregations more sustainable and growing. We currently have a lack of NCD Coaches which are needed to facilitate this, so we will be conducting the surveys in phases or cohorts, with those who have identified those in the congregation to be surveyed, have a group to create and deliver the development plan, and have a NCD Coach identified going first. If you feel you could be a NCD Coach, please email peter.dornan@moravian.org.uk, stephen.maxwell@moravian.org.uk or speak to your Minister. Full training will be provided to help you in this important role!

Although the NCD programme will be the main focus for Project 32 during 2024, it will not be the only focus. The end of the Holy Habits book series will consolidate important spiritual growth

and change within congregations. A census of the Province will also take place, helping build our understanding of who we are as the Moravian Church in the British Province. With synod on the way later in the year, the Project 32 Team will be reaching out to various Provincial committees to look at other ways we can ensure our Province as a whole is sustainable and growing. This will include looking at how we do membership, training and funding of the church.

By the end of the year, the range of Project 32 activities will look like this:

- **Holy Habits Programme**
 - End of the Holy Habits book series and review of successes
 - Review of Holy Habits programme and incorporation into the everyday life of the church
- **Natural Church Development (NCD) Programme**
 - Congregation Surveys
 - Development Plan creation
 - Focus on strengthening the weaknesses identified by each Congregation
- **Synod 2024 Proposals Programme**
 - Membership
 - Training
 - Funding.

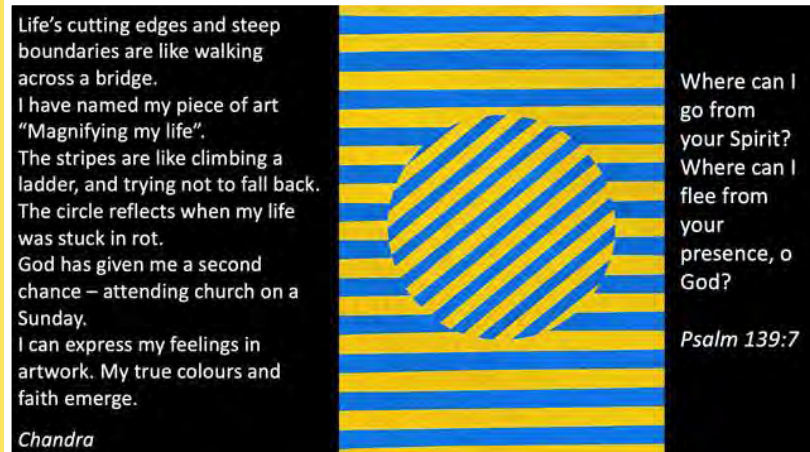
As Chair of Project 32, I thank you for your continued support, and encourage you to get involved! Please come and grab either myself or Peter if you see us at one of the many events we have been invited to across the Province for a chat, we would love to know your thoughts and how you are getting involved in building the future of our Church. After having the shock of the projected rapid decline in membership of our church, we are slowly but surely working towards building a church which is sustainable and growing well into the future.

Br Stephen Maxwell
Project 32 Implementation Board



My understanding of my art therapy experience

Chandra Tailor from Leicester reflects how art therapy has helped him through difficult times.



The process of art therapy is very complex as it deals with the feelings of the pain that are hidden inside your mind that have to be set-free and released. The release of this pain takes a lot of time and energy before your feelings can be expressed on paper or any other form of media. It's like bringing someone back to life.

Sometimes the pain and hurt can be very fearful, and fearsome. My own experience with this therapy had caused me to cry at my unarticulated feelings of hopelessness and confusion. The hostility of my nature made it worse, and I became very unfriendly. The days moved on and I was still drinking heavily, but I still continued my art therapy and my feelings flowed out onto paper. There was a lot of obsessive feelings of hate and anger that I had consumed inside me. I have found the way that art therapy can and will change your feelings towards yourself and it can embrace the true feelings that one has not discovered.

While I held those isolated symptoms of unworthy thoughts, my feelings became a complete wreckage, that I had to wrestle my life out of this misery. If you do hold on to your feelings, it can drive you to madness with frantic emotions. I found that the colours red and black can trigger my inner fears of darkness. Even today red is a very strong and deep colour to use to express internal feeling of love and anger. While in my therapy I expressed a lot of deep and cloudy views of my turmoil. The scenes I created were very disturbing. The darkest side of the colour spectrum is black, to go there is very gloomy and very hostile and evil too. It reminds me of my deepest fears of

darkness. The darkness has laminated me with my sadness, which feels like a low atmospheric pressure to my life.

My work is very descriptive of my personal drinking experience and the process of nearly dying. My feelings are expressed on paper: using paint and the colours red and black, I have drawn a lot of marks and shapes of the Crucifix denoting Christ on it. I wanted to change my faith to Christ, to help me with my mental disorder and to try and give up this demon drink for good.

There is something in art therapy that makes a channel to pour out your feelings, through colour and faith. My experience is that if you have faith in your heart, then out comes a relationship with your soul. You have been invited to show your physical as well as your mental feelings on paper, either through mixed media or creative writing. It's a natural form of therapy when you want to change your life for the better.

I knew that I could not stay as I was and face my life in a turmoil of fear so I resolved to change. My therapy was based at Homerton Hospital and was conducted as group therapy. I had the choice to talk about the art I produced and express my emotions to the group. I did notice that you can learn about other clients' feelings as well as your own. This can lead to practical solutions.

The therapy lasted for three months and as time went on the therapy became very intense for me and the understanding of my emotions showed up on paper: I was using constantly the colours red/black. I thought of Mark Rotho's painting in my mind and I thought I was dying and

maybe there would be no end to these feelings, but the image of the crucifix became deeper. I felt like the power of the colours was encouraging me to draw faint graveyards and gloomy places where I had been. These were the places where my abuse of alcohol took place, and where I met up with strange people in my journey to drink. Today these memories still linger on and remind me of how I lost my identity through drink and became a social outcaste. Nobody knew how I felt, and how my depression got worse. Even now I am still struggling with my mental disorder!

Every night my art-work becomes powerful and intense with the outburst of pure energy and time dedicated to art. The art is an 'angel's blessing' to give me salvation from the drink and the pain of hell. The art therapy is a very powerful tool for exploring your feelings of emotional pain and suffering - its empowering and yet it's a form of healing process. The art work, which I do at home, is using a lot of soft pastels and doing a lot of constructed designs, with acrylic paints and to help with my depression and suppressed feelings of loneliness and cold nights. The art therapy has led me into art where I have completed an Access Course at the London College of Printing in Ornamental Textiles, and from there I would like to become one day an Art Therapist to help heal clients like myself.

Br Chandra Tailor



'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Sr Hyacinth Christian

Sr Christian is a member of Hornsey Moravian Church in London and was for a number of years our representative on the British Women's World Day of Prayer Committee.

Tell us about your early years, education and family background

I was born in Antigua, to parents John and Florence Matthew. I had five siblings: three brothers and two sisters. My education started in Antigua; 1956, arriving in London, I attended Barnsbury School for girls, Islington, continued at Tottenham College, and then Polytechnic of North London. Worked as an invoice typist, shorthand secretary PA, and Primary School Teacher. My family on both sides were very religious, with a mixture of faiths: maternal grandmother was Methodist, a devoted woman of faith, involved in several church duties, and an exemplary Sunday school teacher for 52 years; paternal - Adventist; and so, we practically lived in church, Saturday and Sunday. We were encouraged to participate in Sabbath and Sunday school activities. Family worship with singing was a major part of everyday life.

How and when did you come to faith?

Through my parents' strong Christian values, biblical teaching, and examples that resonated in me. Their 'don't worry', have faith and 'love them anyway'. From childhood I always stuck to my faith regardless of situations.

Tell us about your own family

I am married to David; we have two children, boy and girl. Both baptised at Hornsey, and history repeated itself. They went with my parents and sisters to Adventist on Saturday and Moravian on Sunday with us. We have a granddaughter and a one-year-old great grandson. I am thankful to God for our close and caring family.

How have you integrated your faith into work life?

Being taught to treat others as I would like to be treated, I made that my guide. In my first places of work, many colleagues realised I was a Christian and respected my values. Although at times my faith was tested, it also kept me strong. I was also fortunate to have worked in a faith-based company.

What part of Church life have given you most satisfaction and what have been the real challenges?

Singing, whether in our church choir, worship leading, or with the ecumenical Caribbean choir.

Being, Moravian Representative on the World Day of Prayer for nine years.

Being part of a local bible study, prayer group, held in an elderly neighbour's home. Communicating with older people, either by phone or letters.

I have done various voluntary work e.g. teaching older folks and younger people who have reading difficulties. Showing Gods love.

Challenges? Not knowing Moravian history. I took a lay course with Rev Smith, explaining my limited Moravian knowledge. He was extremely helpful. In fact, it was Rev Smith and Sr Olive Linyard who put my name forward to be the Moravian Representative on the World Day of Prayer.

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

Yes, 1954 when our parents immigrated to England. How could God make them leave us?

Again, on the death of my parents: Mother within 11 months of their final return to Antigua and, Father six months later. We made many trips for the funerals, however, on the final day, visiting the cemeteries I was very angry - how could this happen? While I was driving back to get ready for the airport, on a hill our car just turned over. I felt as though God was asking me 'why are you angry? You and David could have died, leaving your children without parents'. That was a significant turning point for me. Hence Ps 69:30. 'I will praise God's name in song and glorify Him in thanksgiving'.

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, being at the bedside of my father, two brothers, and sister, I am confident there is a better place, particularly after my sister's last words to me.

Yes, I do believe Christ died and rose again. And His coming again will be Glorious beyond our imagination or words can describe.

What can we learn from other Churches?

Some of their ways of acceptance and integration. Being welcoming and encouraging enabling everyone to feel comfortable.

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

Some people feel organised religion, is out of date, too strict and formal. Others assume that by joining certain religious groups, they will be successful.

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

Films: *Lilies of the field*. It's funny, moving and I love singing Amen.

Books: *Steps To Christ* by Ellen G. White. I was given a copy as a child, and it has always been my help and guide.

Music: I love *All the way my Saviour leads me*. It makes me think of God's goodness throughout my life.

The place where you feel closest to God?

Being in the garden or a place where I am surrounded by nature, seeing and hearing the wonders of God's creation.

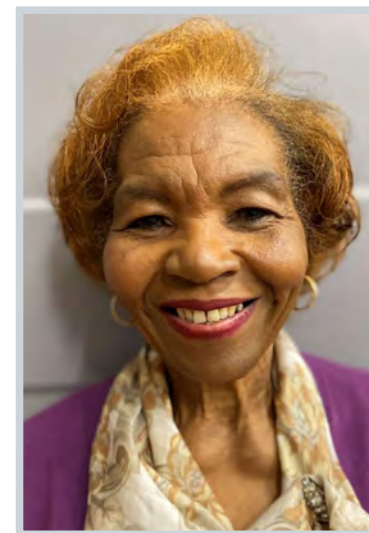
What inscription on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

Something simple - name and 'Forever in our hearts, rest in peace'.

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

Wish I could fluently speak a foreign language, although I am able to understand a few. Also play the piano well, however, I can read music and learn songs and hymns.

Joys: my family, but a special joy in having a great grandson.



© Sr Sarah Groves

Movement in Moravian Church Membership in the UK - Part 1

The Moravian Church in Britain has always been a very small denomination, probably never much exceeding 6,000 members in total. The initial purpose was to evangelise where churches were distant, or attendance was low. The Moravian Church was not intended to compete with other Protestant denominations in the UK but to complement them. This largely accounts for the low numbers.

Membership statistics for the British Moravian Church are not straightforward and occasionally contradictory, with Synod reports showing lower figures than the annual Almanacks. For the last 150 years we have figures for members, adherents (regular attenders but not admitted to membership) and some figures for average attendance at services and for those taking communion. Clearly attendance at a service may be in excess of membership and not all members regularly attend church or take communion. For example, in 1910 Baildon had 144 members but an average of only 85 taking communion on any Sunday in that year. Membership however gives a good idea of the strength of a denomination and is the usual figure applied in historical surveys. Just to give an idea of Moravian numbers in 1869, one of the earliest years for which statistics are readily available, the Moravian Church in Britain had a total of around 5,500 members and adherents. This is minute compared with the then membership of the two denominations in Britain with which the Moravians are currently working alongside in local ecumenical partnerships, namely the English Methodists and the URC. The various branches of the Methodist Church in England in that year had a total of 570,000 members and the Congregational Church about 300,000 and those Presbyterian churches which later joined Congregationalists to form the URC had about 180,000 members, so 480,000 members in these two (later URC) denominations in 1869.

Church historians place the beginning of the gradual decline of religion in Europe to the 17th century, but as regards non-conformist denominations in Britain the decline began just before World War I. Methodism peaked in 1910 and the British Moravian Church probably a couple of years later. Moravian statistics are not always clear.

The Moravian Almanac shows around 6,500 members in the early 20th century although this may be an exaggeration as Synod reports, which first included membership figures in 1913, show a membership up to 2,000 lower than the Almanac figures. Moravian membership numbers dropped steadily after their peak (with a welcome upwards turn following Caribbean immigration) until the last 40-50 years when a more serious decline set in, a development shared with other non-conformist churches.

To give some idea of the decline the following table shows members plus adherent numbers from Synod Reports at ten yearly intervals with the drop from the previous figure expressed as a percentage.

1913	4,954	
1923	4,111	-17%
1933	3,728	-9%
1943	3,521	-6%
1953	3,266	-7%
1963	2,793	-14%
1973	2,834	+1.5%*
1983	2,634	-7%
1993	2,518	-4%
2003	1,780	-29%
2013	1,190	-33%
2021	971	-18%

*This rise is almost certainly a result of Caribbean immigration.

It can be seen that a sharper rise in the fall of membership numbers began during the 1960s and has continued to this day. This pattern of decline is wholly in line with other denominations, both Anglican and non-conformist, and has been the subject of much research. A detailed study of the phenomenon can be found in Hugh McLeod's *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* from which several of the observations which follow are taken.

I attach for comparison a table showing percentage drops at ten yearly intervals for the Methodist and URC denominations for the last 60 years. I should point out that Methodist and URC statistics differ somewhat according to the source used. The URC is somewhat vague regarding membership figures and exact figures are difficult to find. In addition, two other small denominations merged with the URC after 1981.

	Methodist Church	URC
1973	600,000	*200,000
1983	460,000 -23%	145,000 -27%
1993	395,000 -14%	115,000 -20%
2003	305,000 -22%	88,000 -23%
2013	209,000 -31%	50,000 -43%
2021	164,000 -21%	40,000 -20%

* Pre-merged denominations.

Of course, the lower starting numbers for Moravians means that small changes have a more dramatic effect on the statistics. These statistics, albeit rather broadly, also reflect the general decline in church attendance in the UK. Whereas UK Church membership halved between 1930 and 2015, overall, UK Church attendance halved between 1980 and 2015. There has also been a sharp decline in both those identifying as Christians and those with a belief in the existence of God. The British Social Attitudes Survey shows a drop of belief in God from 91% in 1961 to 55% in 2018 while in 1983 67% of British adults self-identified as Christians and by 2021 the figure was 46%. I strongly suspect that even the latter number includes many 'cultural Christians' who see themselves as part of the Christian family but who are non-believers.

This decline is not, of course, simply a UK phenomenon. In the US Church membership dropped from 70% of the population in 1995 (where it had stood virtually unchanged since at least 1940) to 47% in 2021. Similar decline is taking place in Europe too. In 1985, 70% of the Dutch considered themselves affiliated to Christianity. By 2021 that figure had dropped to 43% (despite, of course, population increases). Those identifying as Catholic in France declined from 81% in 1986 to 47% in 2020, while the number of those who identify as non-religious rose from 16% to 40%.

I think it can be agreed that these are all disturbing trends for the Christian Church.

The Moravian Church in Britain stands out, incidentally, for having largely retained the number of congregations despite falls in Church membership. There were 38 British congregations in 1879 and 35 in 2005 when total membership was more than 70% below the 1879 figures. Denominations with a wider spread of churches and less well financially endowed than the British Moravian Church closed churches and chapels substantially more as numbers fell. Fortunately for the Moravians, finances have enabled them to keep open sparsely attended places of worship. Even today there are 29 congregations remaining but five have members and adherents in single figures.

Why the sudden general drop in church membership and attendance since 1960? Much ink has been spilt over this and there is considerable disagreement. The first point is that the decline appears slightly worse owing to the boost given to Christianity during World War II, a war described by Churchill himself as a fight for Christian civilisation in Europe. Nonetheless the 1960s still represent an acceleration of a pre-war decline.

Much of the blame is placed on the changes in society taking place in the 1960s: religious doubt was more openly expressed in the media, there was a decline in collective identity, improvements in social care by the State were taking over a traditional role of the Church and leaving it more isolated from the populace, Christian theologians were expressing their own

doubt publicly (John Robinson's *Honest to God*, etc), a general radicalism was apparent in society with the breaking of previous taboos and increasing wealth providing entertainment and other activities on a Sunday.

What does stand out as an important factor is membership age. Young people were far less likely to follow in their parents' footsteps as churchgoers meaning that there was no regular replacement of members. Sunday School attendance too dropped in the late 1950s. Either church-going parents did not ensure that their children attended church or children decided that they either did not share their parents' beliefs or, even if they did, found a more interesting activity on a Sunday. This trend began in the late 1950s and has, it seems, continued. In 2011 50% of Methodist congregations were 66 years old or more and between 1985 and 2005 those in the 20-29 age group attending any UK church declined by 62%. (Methodists are renowned keepers of statistics.)

Another factor, which most churchgoers must have noticed, is the absence of men, especially younger men, attending church. This also began to increase in the 1960s, again probably because of general changes in society. Couples began to share interests. Social research suggests that previously it was more usual for husband and wife to have completely separate interests but now women were more likely to give up attending church when they married if their husband did not attend. Also, more women went to work (62% in 1981 compare with 26% in 1951) and therefore had less free time. Between 2000 and 2020 49% of men under 30 ceased to attend church in the UK. Indeed, some have predicted that on current statistics no men will attend church in the UK after 2028. Research in the USA indicates that 93% of families follow a father into becoming Christians while only 17% follow a mother. If that applies equally to the UK then the decline in male congregations matters greatly.

The decline in Christian belief obviously feeds the decline in Church membership and attendance. Whether declining membership has led to declining belief or vice versa is not clear, probably both are true. Linda Woodhead, professor of theology at King's College, London, states that 'losing faith in God is not the main reason people leave organised religion. It's just as often the other way around - people who don't belong to a religion are less likely to believe in God. If your family isn't religious and you're raised without any meaningful contact with a religious group, you're less likely to believe'. Once the chain of church attendance or Christian practice in a family is broken it is especially hard to restart.

In the second part I shall look at what researchers have discovered about churches which have bucked the trend.

Adrian Wilsdon

With thanks to Lorraine Parsons, the Moravian Archivist

Bath Weston

On Sunday 16th July we hosted a welcome service for our new minister Rev Lorraine Shorten, which was led by Rev Jane Carter. A point was made that the district now had all female spiritual leadership team. In July we had a baptism included in the service, which is always so nice - we have not had a baptism for a while. In August we had a confirmation and two people becoming members of the church, this was carried out by Sr Lorraine. Sr Lorraine holds Lego afternoons in the school holidays once a week, and these are becoming popular.

© Sr Carole Young



Our Harvest Supper was held in September and was very well supported. Our harvest charity this year was for the water survival box scheme. Two representatives came along and gave a presentation. Its primary purpose is to provide a means of purifying water.

The Boys Brigade went to Snowdonia for their Boys Brigade (BB) mountaineering clubs annual summer camp - lots of activities for all to do, which must have been very enjoyable. We had another Family Fun Night at the end of October. Pizzas were on the menu this time plus ice cream. Numbers were down, but it was half term, so families could have been away. The next one will be at the end of January (Burns night) so haggis, mashed potato and swede will be served. Sr Lorraine is running a craft evening once a month. At the last two meetings we have been either knitting poppies or

making them out of plastic bottles and then painting them. These were then tied on to a length of netting and placed on the railings at the front of the church. On Remembrance Sunday, there is always a service at the Weston War Memorial, the BB band march down the high Street playing while the brownies and guides plus mums and dads follow behind, and the road is closed off, but not for long though. This year the band had a new recruit, Sr Lorraine playing the big drum. It all went off well even though it was raining. Then it's back up to the church for a short service with our congregation and a few of the Methodists plus anyone else who were most welcome to join us. Sr Lorraine had a busy day, playing the drum, taking part in the service at the war memorial, then back to church for the next service. Both services were special in their own right.

Another good evening we had at the beginning of November was a Mamma Mia singalong. This was very well supported and so enjoyable - Sr Lorraine and Br Chris were the organisers and setter uppers! Another singalong hopefully in February! Now we are looking forward to the Journey of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. It is an opportunity to pause and give thanks for the love, hope and joy found in Jesus, our Saviour and friend.

May you all have a Happy and Peaceful Christmas.

Sr Carole Young

Baildon, Yorkshire

Our minister, Br James Woolford, was on a three-month sabbatical from September, so we are grateful to all those who stepped into the breach during his absence.

Members attended a Joint Service with our sister congregation at Fulneck on 10th September followed by a faith lunch. Baildon members who attended thoroughly enjoyed the service taken by Sr Kathryn Woolford and the fellowship afterwards.

The following Sunday was our Harvest Festival and we welcomed Br Trevor Kernohan from Fulneck to lead this service which was also a Parade service. The last Saturday in September saw the village wide Scarecrow Festival with its theme 'All things Royal'. The village was full of excellent, amusing and artistic scarecrows and refreshments were available all over Baildon including inside and outside our Church hall. Outside we hosted a BBQ sausage sizzle which was very popular and inside we served tea, coffee and cakes, which again, did a roaring trade.

Our October Holy Communion service was led by Br Bob Hopcroft and the November one by Sr Kathryn Woolford.

Thank you to both these friends for taking our services, it is always good to see them.

The Beavers group helped Sr Ruth France take the Toy Service on 19th November. They performed a lively dramatic mime based on Noah's Ark, (quite timely in view of all the recent storms!) and all the uniformed groups donated toys, which were given to a local community project.

Members participated in the Moravian Singers' Choral Festival at Fulneck on 26th November and others went to support and enjoy this annual service of music and poetry, focussing on Advent.

On December 3rd we welcomed back Br James when he led us in our Lovefeast and Holy Communion. It was good to see him once again and we hope that he has greatly benefitted from his sabbatical. The same day saw the annual 'Baildon at Christmas' event throughout the village, culminating in the Christmas lights 'switch on'. We participated in this and had lots of Christmas stalls in our hall and supplied refreshments throughout the day.

Sr Ruth France

Kilwarlin, Northern Ireland

Holy Week was mostly held on Zoom although the Easter morning service was, as usual held at 8am in the church burial ground. This was followed by a full Ulster fry breakfast.

Our next event of the year was Family Sunday when we were joined by various extended family members, some joining by video link or recorded messages. This service was followed by a delicious soup lunch.

Instead of our usual summer garden party this year we held a craft fair and open day. There was an assortment of craft stalls, afternoon tea was held in the church hall, a talk by a local historian and guided tours of the church grounds. Fortunately, we were blessed for this with one of the sunniest days of the year.

Members took turns manning a Moravian stall at the Balmoral Show, a large agricultural show held in May each year. Kilwarlin was also included as part of the City Council stand, which featured Zula's garden as one of the places to visit within the locality. We found taking part in the show a wonderful experience and we're delighted to find much interest. A few people then followed up our meeting at the show by coming to our open day to see the church and garden for themselves.



© Br Livingstone Thompson

Anniversary service this year was taken by Dr Alex Wimberley from the Corrymeela Retreat Centre and was well attended, again followed by tea in the hall.

Sr Esther Law



© Br James Woolford

There were plenty of craft activities for the children to get involved with. Several pumpkins had been placed on one table to be decorated with Halloween stickers, which were great and less messy. Children could also decorate recycled plastic milk bottles with spooky faces or stencils, and these would glow as lanterns when glow sticks were placed inside them. Other craft activities included biscuit decorating or a variety crafting table with bits and bobs.

Once the children had all spent time crafting and creating, it was time for the Pumpkin Pinata. All the children had a wonderful time hitting the pumpkin in order to release the sweets which finally tumbled to the ground with the winning hit.

To finish off the Pumpkin Party the parachute was brought out. Both children and parents had a fabulous time bouncing a soft ball across and around the parachute. Those children brave enough ran under the raised parachute and some even popped up in the middle. With refreshments available the event was a huge success.

Gomersal, Yorkshire

On 21st of October, a Pumpkin Party was organised by Gomersal Junior Church leaders. The event was well attended by local children to Gomersal and friends of one of our youngest members, Bobby Dickinson, who had invited from when he attended Fulneck School.

On Sunday 12th November we welcomed the local Scout and Cub group who, along with their leaders and families, paraded to church for our Remembrance Service.

Sr Norma Machell

In Memoriam

The Provincial Board were saddened to hear about the deaths of two of our retired ministers, Br Peter Madsen Gubi (Snr), and Br Basil Rogers. Br Gubi was ordained in 1953 and served extensively in the East West Indies and the British Provinces until his retirement in 1996. Br Rogers, an ordained URC minister, was instrumental in uniting the congregations at Kingswood and most recently had taken membership at Bath Coronation Avenue. We look forward to reading more on their ministry in future Messenger articles. We were further saddened to hear of the death of Br Ron Davey, who with his wife Sr Ros Davey, served faithfully as the Fulneck Choir House wardens and administrators. We keep the families of Br Gubi, Br Rogers and Br Davey in our prayers.

Provincial Diary for January

7	Commissioning Service for Lay Pastor, Sr Sue Groves	Brockweir
9-10	Provincial Board meeting	Church House

Baptisms

26th Nov 2023 Aliza-Jean Greevy Fairfield

Received into Membership

19th Nov 2023 Edward Warr Bath Weston

19th Nov 2023 Thalia Warr Bath Weston

Deaths

3rd Nov 2023 Rev Basil Rogers Bath Coronation Avenue

11th Nov 2023 Brian Williams Fairfield

27th Nov 2023 Dorothy Bird Royton

1	New Year's Day
6	Epiphany
7	Christmas Day - Orthodox
14	New Year - Orthodox
18-25	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (https://ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer)
25	Burns Night
27	Holocaust Memorial Day (http://hmd.org.uk/)
28	World Leprosy Day (www.leprosymission.org.uk)

Dates to remember!

Against all odds - the Czech Province

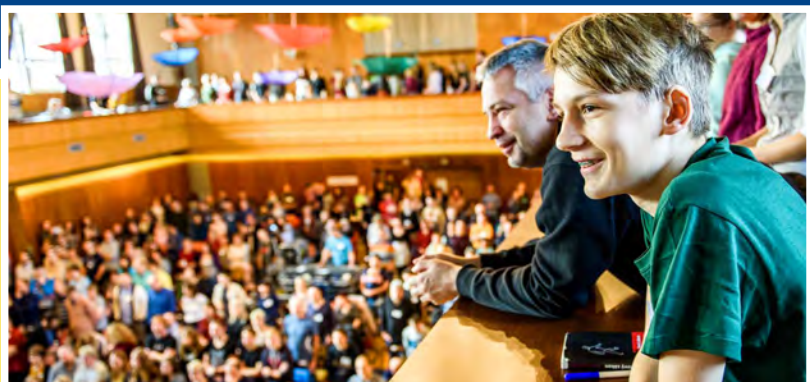
Continuing a series of articles from Provinces around the Unity

Looking at the story of Unitas Fratrum in Bohemia and Moravia, it is a tale of resilient and living faith persevering in the face of oppression.

The story began by several historical events: the burning of the reformer Jan Hus - a follower of the Englishman John Wycliffe, the subsequent brutal Hussite wars, and alongside them, as their true antithesis, the influence of thinker Petr Chelčický, who spoke of the fighting through the power of the Holy Spirit rather than the power of weapons. God, however, used this specific mixture of circumstances, evoking very contradictory emotions, not only to establish the Unity but also to imprint specific distinctive qualities upon it. The character of the Unity of the Brethren, its 'soul', if you will, was woven from these values: a desire for a genuine living relationship with Jesus, a hunger for Truth for which one is willing to lay down their life, unconditional openness to one another, humbleness and allegiance, simplicity, peacefulness, and concern for one's neighbours. Over the centuries, all these values were further strengthened and deepened. Largely because the brethren in the Kingdom of Bohemia lived almost constantly under oppression. From the very beginning, they were considered a sect, being either shunned and ridiculed at best or persecuted, imprisoned, and expelled, sometimes killed, at worst. Even as the rulers changed in the kingdom, from the Hussite king George of Poděbrady to the Habsburgs, the Unity was still mistreated. Brief periods of relief and relative freedom (after the issuance of The Letter of Majesty of the Emperor Rudolph II. in 1609 or the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918) were immediately followed by much worse oppression than before, whether it was the recatholisation after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 or the Nazis and Communists in the 20th century.

Not only did the Unity of the Brethren in Bohemia and Moravia not perish, but it thrived. They were there for all people, regardless of social class. They had an incredibly functional and progressive education system open not only to rich and noble, but to everybody, including peasants or girls. They had open arms for the poor and those in need. They flexibly responded to the needs of their time, whether in preserving the Czech language, establishing hospitals, or even brewing beer. And because they were honest and peaceful, and people knew it, they won the hearts of many influential figures, even if they themselves did not belong to the Unity in many cases. Often, such unexpected favour saved Brethren from those who would rather see them reduced to ashes. They always remained the smallest church in the kingdom, but this church and its values intertwined with the Czech nation to the extent that Unitas Fratrum is still perceived as part of our common heritage. Every Czech knows Hus, Comenius, or the Kralice Bible, and Hus's declaration 'Truth prevails' is embroidered on our presidential flag.

For four entire centuries, the Czechs lived under the dominion of another - Austria-Hungary, then Nazi Germany, and finally, Bolshevik Russia. During this epoch, our nation's faith was



Czech Province annual conference

© Br Daniel Dancovsky

prohibited, and the shepherds who would tend to its flock were either expelled or silenced.

But God never abandoned His Czech 'lost son', and neither did He forsake the Unitas Fratrum, even when it seemed on the brink of oblivion. Initially restored in Herrnhut, eventually, He brought it back to the land of its fathers. This miraculous reunion unfolded nearly 160 years ago, and it should be noted that the British Province of the Moravian Church played its part in allowing this re-sown seed to take root and flourish in its homeland. We know this, and we thank you immensely for it! And so here we are now, Moravians of the present day, thanks to the immense grace of God finally (and for now) living in freedom.

Our congregations (there are 30 of them) live closely connected across the country. We strive to be, despite our diversity, 'one body' connected to our Chief Elder, Jesus Christ. Congregations have community centres, where they run family clubs, children's clubs, youth clubs, clubs for seniors, engage in social or legal counselling, foster care, or prevention of social pathologies. Where we can, we open schools - it's not entirely easy because our atheist state isn't particularly inclined towards church education. Nevertheless, we have managed to start three kindergartens and two elementary schools, one high school, one vocational school, one language school, and our own theological seminary. We also have one mission place, which is Nowa Sol in Poland (a former Moravian settlement). Congregations also operate larger or smaller businesses that help finance these activities. Many diverse and interesting enterprises are here to find - cafés, guesthouses, fast-food restaurants, clothing or grocery stores; construction, architectural, accounting firms; carpenters, plumbers, and various craftsmen, restorers, farmers, orchardists, fishermen, or a medical equipment rental. The brief period after the fall of communism, when people in the Czech Republic enthusiastically embraced the message of Jesus and gladly attended Christian events, is long gone, but it's not a problem for Jesus. He leads us forward, giving us opportunities to speak with people differently, to build quality and deep relationships with them on a personal level. We can once again give them Jesus Christ, who is always close to us, cares, and holds the power to transform human life fundamentally.

Sr Ester Brožová
Jednota Bratrská

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