



Historic Election at the Irish Council of Churches' AGM



Bishop Andrew Foster, former President of ICC, Bishop Sarah Groves, the new President of ICC and Charles McMullen, the new vice president of ICC.

© Damian Jackson, General Secretary of ICC

On 11th April 2024, a significant and historic event took place at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC), held at the Gracehill Moravian Church in Ballymena. This AGM saw the election of Bishop Sarah Groves as President, marking a notable milestone in the ICC's centennial history. Bishop Groves succeeds Bishop Andrew Forster of the Church of Ireland, becoming only the second Moravian to hold this position. The first was the late Bishop Joe Cooper, emphasising the significance of this event within the Moravian community and the broader ecumenical landscape in Ireland.

The election of Bishop Sarah Groves was a momentous occasion, highlighted by the proposal speech delivered by Br Mark Kernohan, a member of the ICC executive and Chair of the Irish District of the Moravian Church. In his remarks, Br Kernohan underscored the historic nature of Sr Groves' election, noting the pride that the Moravian community holds as a founding member church within the ICC's 100-year history. The election comes at a time where there is a challenge to re-imagine ecumenism and to tackle social issues.

The Role of the Irish Council of Churches

The ICC has long been a vital organisation in promoting unity and cooperation among Christian denominations in Ireland. Established in 1923, the council has worked tirelessly to bridge divides and foster a spirit of ecumenism. Though not the first time that a female will serve as President, the election of Bishop Sarah Groves is a testament to the ICC's commitment to inclusion and its recognition of the valuable contributions of diverse Christian traditions.

Bishop Groves brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective to her new role as President. Her leadership is expected to build on the leadership of her predecessor, especially as the ICC is looking to establish a new office in Northern Ireland. As only the second Moravian to hold the presidency, Bishop Groves' election is a source of pride and inspiration for the Moravian community and the broader ecumenical movement in Ireland. After her term in office as president, Sr Groves will remain on the executive as Immediate Past President.

(continued overleaf on page 63)



From Every Nation?

(page 64)



Br Fred Linyard
(1928-2024)

(page 66)



Prayer Spaces in Schools

(page 69)

There is no doubt that 'End of Life' issues have shot up the political and social agenda recently. Dame Esther Rantzen, among others, becoming a member of Dignitas and speaking so lucidly about her desire to be in control of the end of her life has made it all seem so reasonable.

The old idea of the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away has been challenged by so many developments over the years. Assisted conception and caesarean or induced births for medical reasons have taken away some of the uncertainty of birth dates. For many people and for good medical reasons the fact of birth and the time of birth can be amended by doctors and midwives.

Public health improvements have done more than anything else to extend life expectancy in so many countries. And we think it only right and proper that medical conditions that would once have been fatal in a short period of time should be treated so that life expectancy and quality of life should be extended and enhanced. We do not regard this as meddling in God's territory.

I don't think many people feel that we should enforce medical treatments on adults in their right mind. There can come a point when someone who is ill has the right to say I have had enough, let nature take its course and just keep me comfortable.

However there has been, until now, a real reluctance, in this country, to embrace the deliberate ending of life in a medical setting. I know that sometimes a heart-breaking decision has to be made to switch off life support when all hope of

any sentient life is extinguished. I also know that the means of suppressing pain in the last days can, as a consequence hasten death. But the decision to take a tablet or have an injection and end it all seems still to me a step to far.

In my experience, as a minister and from personal experience, I have seen that those last days around a bedside can be a precious time for a family. Society gives us space and permission to sit with our loved ones and talk, touch and love freely. It seems that during that period time itself stands still - the busy world is outside and around that bed all is quiet. Family and friends talk to each other and to the loved ones and no one begrudges that time; instead, sometimes family just will for that time to last and will do almost anything to keep the loved one there with them. Letting go is so very hard!

I know that some deaths are sudden, not everything is peaceful and not everyone has loving family and friends, but to just end everything at a set time seems to deny those last dying moments to everyone. I would much rather have legislation that gave more money to hospitals for single rooms for those who are nearing the end of their life and of course more people trained in palliative care. A good death for everyone should be our goal!



Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

Letter to the Editorial Team

Dear Editorial Team,

The inaugural meeting of my discussion group went ahead at Lower Wyke Moravian Church at 11.30am today and got off to a good start. There were eight of us, two ministers, one retired minister and five others. Br Graham Mallinson prepared the Sunday School room for us and made things ready for lunch.

I acted as focus for the discussions having promised not to speak but as the one invited to do the job of Chair was not with us, I did speak. We could discuss anything which concerned us, however, our Church and Christianity engaged 25 minutes of our two and a half hour allotted time with 20 minutes taken for lunch.

We discussed success for Fairtrade, our Church members' peace philosophy, fake news, fake postage stamps - recipient penalised by having to pay extra for post. Then we realised it was two o'clock.

It was said that the time was well spent. Next time maybe some applied democracy points may occupy some of our discussion time, who knows?

Br Alan Holdsworth

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Historic Election at the Irish Council of Churches' AGM continued from front page

Distinguished Attendees

The AGM was attended by several distinguished leaders from member churches of the ICC. Among them was Sr Roberta Hoey, Chair of the Provincial Board of the Moravian Church of Great Britain and Ireland, whose attendance underscored the support and solidarity within the Moravian community. Also present was Dr Nicola Brady, the General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, whose participation highlighted the broader ecumenical connections and the collaborative spirit among Christian communities across the British Isles.

Launch of 'From Every Nation' Booklet

In addition to the election, the AGM featured the launch of a significant new resource for the ICC and its member churches: the booklet titled 'From Every Nation'. This handbook is designed to guide congregations on their journey from welcome to belonging, addressing critical issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion. The booklet specifically tackles the challenges of racism and the importance of understanding and addressing it within both church and society.

Richard Reddie from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland had the honour of launching the booklet. His presentation emphasised the booklet's role as a practical and educational tool for congregations seeking to foster more inclusive and welcoming communities. The booklet is expected to serve as a valuable resource for churches as they navigate the complexities of diversity and strive to create environments where all individuals feel a sense of belonging.

The launch of 'From Every Nation' at the AGM highlights the ICC's ongoing commitment to addressing issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion. The booklet is a tangible manifestation of the council's dedication to creating welcoming church communities. By providing practical guidance and fostering a deeper understanding of racism and its impacts, the booklet

aims to equip congregations with the tools they need to effect meaningful change.

Richard Reddie's involvement in the launch underscores the collaborative efforts between the ICC and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. This partnership reflects a shared vision of promoting justice and inclusion within Christian communities in Ireland and beyond.

Looking Ahead

As Bishop Sarah Groves assumes her new role as President of the ICC, there is a sense of optimism and anticipation for the future. Her election represents a historic milestone and a reaffirmation of the ICC's commitment to ecumenical partnership. Under her leadership, the council is poised to continue its important work of fostering deeper relationships among member churches and addressing pressing social issues.

The launch of 'From Every Nation' marks a significant step forward in the ICC's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. The booklet's impact will be measured by the positive changes it inspires within congregations, as they strive to become more welcoming and equitable communities.

The 2024 AGM of the Irish Council of Churches celebrated both leadership transition and the launch of an important new resource. With Bishop Sarah Groves as President and the 'From Every Nation' booklet in hand, the ICC is positioned to continue its mission of fostering unity, justice, and inclusion within the Christian community in Ireland.

Br Livingstone Thompson
Provincial Board and Minister of Kilwarlin and University Road Belfast Moravian Congregations



ICC Press Release: Moravian Bishop installed as New President of Irish Council of Churches

The 101st Annual Meeting of the Irish Council of Churches took place in Gracehill Moravian Church, Co. Antrim today. The new President and Vice President were installed at the meeting.

The Annual Meeting gathers senior church leaders and lay representatives from across its 15 member churches in Ireland, bringing together the broad spectrum of Irish Christianity. The Irish Council of Churches also maintains a structured dialogue with the Catholic

Bishops' Conference through the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, representatives of which were also in attendance.

Bishop Sarah Groves was installed as the new ICC President. Bishop Groves serves as both Minister of Gracehill Moravian Church and as a Bishop in the Moravian Church. She has been ICC Vice-President since 2022. Speaking after her installation today, Bishop Groves shared:

'As the Moravian Church was one of the founding members of ICC over 100 years

ago, this is an exciting day. I look forward to my term as ICC President and to leading the organisation as we continue to equip Ireland's churches to connect through a common belief in Christ.'

Very Rev Dr Charles McMullen was also installed, as the incoming ICC Vice-President. Dr McMullen has been Minister of West Church, Bangor in County Down, Northern Ireland since 1999 and served as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland from 2018-2019.

A new anti-racism handbook has been produced by the Irish Council of Churches:

From Every Nation?

A Handbook for a congregation's journey from welcome to belonging



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How did this book come about?

In partnership with VOX Magazine and with the active support of Evangelical Alliance in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, the Irish Council of Churches conducted a survey in 2021 on the experiences of people from ethnic minorities in Irish churches and the attitudes of the majority ethnic group to increasing diversity in their churches and communities. Over 1,000 responses were collected. Stories and examples ranged from the painful ...

Being Black in Northern Ireland is traumatic: On a daily basis, racist acts such as name-calling, people waving banana skins from cars, people crossing the road to avoid you, are common experiences. The five Black young adult men I know are reluctant to leave their homes and struggle to stay in (all-White) workplaces.

To the aspirational ...

We worship in a congregation that has recently welcomed refugee families ... but I am sure we can do better in welcoming them ...

90% of respondents believed it was important for churches to engage in conversations about race and racism but 55% of clergy interviewed said that whilst talking about race is not a taboo subject, 'we don't talk about it much'.

This book emerges from the compelling realisation that by the time Jesus was of school age, he had already experienced the slur of being an immigrant as part of a minority culture in a foreign land. Jesus would have faced daily choices of what was the appropriate language to speak, according to which cultural group he was present with.

Who is this book for?

You may think this anti-racism handbook is for congregations that are multicultural. However, this book is as much for monocultural congregations as multicultural ones. Whether you belong to a congregation that reflects one

culture or many, becoming a church that is anti-racist should be important. Think of the football team your child or grandchild supports and the diversity present there. Consider how we all seamlessly traverse racial barriers on social media. Reflect on how young people are plunged into global villages through university experiences. We may not see this diversity present in the one hour of worship on a Sunday morning, yet by cultivating greater awareness of our attitudes towards others, we step into God's ultimate plan of seeing a kingdom of disciples who worship from all nations. Sometimes when we hear or see examples of racism, our antenna goes up but if it does not directly affect us, we switch off again. The purpose of this book is to raise awareness in such a way that we are not just light switches to racism, that easily switch on and off, but rather smoke detectors, constantly alert to how others experience or do not experience God's love in the world.

How to use this book

It can be all too easy to feel guilty that we are not doing more in terms of welcoming others. However, this book intentionally starts with God's vision for creation at the beginning and end of time as a means of showing that this book is not intended to guilt you towards action but invite you towards wholeness. The book is divided into ten short sections. This is so that small groups may read and reflect on manageable portions together. The handbook helps identify places where congregations can often get stuck on the anti-racist journey, like when unity gets confused with uniformity or when there's a tendency to deny or minimise difference. It also provides biblical examples of how early Christians navigated cross cultural differences like at the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, or when Jonah had to overcome his bias against Nineveh. At the end of each section are 'arc' questions e.g. A = awareness: how are you becoming more aware of issues to do with race, R = relationships, are there ways you might

be able to continue cultivating cross-cultural relationships, and C = commitment: What commitment might your church be able to make that helps take the next step on becoming an anti-racist congregation.

In Luke 4 when Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day to pronounce his fulfillment of the Jubilee vision, he quickly transitioned to describing the widow of Zarephath. This widow lacked capacity because she was a foreigner who had no land rights and yet Jesus was making the point that through faith in God, she now not only belonged but had a kingdom inheritance. In a society which impetuously demands we choose single identities and competitive sides; this jubilee vision is welcome. When we embrace and live into this multicultural vision of church, we are truly living the upside-down kingdom where kingdom birthright may be claimed by people from every nation tribe and tongue.

It is too tempting to live diminishing lives of scarcity where we blinker ourselves to deep connections with the stranger. It is our calling to live out a different vision for society. The beauty of the Christian faith is that it resurrects and makes visible some of the eternal connections of kingdom family that transcend the deeper conflicts of this age.

If you are interested in getting a handbook, please contact: megan@irishchurches.org

You can also download a copy at: <https://www.irishchurches.org/cmsfiles/From-Every-Nation-.pdf>

For anyone interested in learning more about how to use the book in your congregation and to hear stories of transformation from other local congregations please sign up to the webinar on 26th June at 12 pm by sending an email to: megan@irishchurches.org

Karen Campbell
Irish Council of Churches

Highlighting Holy Habits for the MWA Away Day

I led the Bible Study workshop at the MWA Day, and took as my theme 'sharing'. This is one of the Holy Habits as yet not addressed by our congregations. The workshop opened with a short prayer that was followed by a discussion about the different things that we could share; not just possessions and tangible things but our time, gifts, knowledge and experiences could also be shared with others.

The individuals in the group were then given a clean sheet of paper and asked to draw around their open hand and then write on the outstretched fingers all the different ways in which their congregation share. An amazing list was made, both spiritual and practical and it was clear that their congregations share much with each other, the local community and with the wider world.

It was agreed that true sharing was sometimes a skill that had to be learned and was made up of many different facets. Two Bible passages were chosen to illustrate this point:

1) *Sharing hospitality*
Genesis Ch 10 v 1-5

2) *Sharing time and love*
Luke Ch 10 v 33-37

After discussing these passages with question-and-answer sessions the sisters were then asked to add, on the reverse of their 'hand paper', any new things that their congregations could do in the light of thinking about the above Bible passages. Things to do in the future!

Following a time of prayer the group then left to share in Holy Communion with the other sisters from throughout the Province - a meaningful and uplifting

time for all.

As we approach the last six months of this two-year course of Holy Habits, we hope that many have gained from a deeper insight into the different aspects of worship, of service and of life within a church family. The course was designed to grow individuals spiritually and enrich church life in all its diversity, encouraging people to enquire, learn more about and experience the love of Jesus.

The whole series of Holy habits is based on Acts Ch 2 v 42-47. These verses end with the words 'And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved'.

Let us hope this happens within the Moravian Church!

Sr Diane Thornton
MWA

Nourishing body, mind and soul - Personal impressions of the MWA Away Day 2024

I joined around 30 London sisters for our journey to Hall Green on 13th April and although it was an early start and a long-ish trip (Harlesden - Hornsey - Hall Green) it was enjoyable from start to finish. Thanks to Heather from Harlesden for such efficient travel organisation.

Having arrived in time for a bit of 'Singspiration' (ok, we were a little late), Sr Minette Flemmings, another Fetter Lane sister, and I were very happy to hear our previous minister, Sr Claire Maxwell, give the address during the morning worship. So, are we Gladiators or Contenders; or a bit of both?

Srs Gillian Taylor and Audrey Kendall brought us up to date with the work of the Central Committee and the recipients of the year's fundraising efforts, a very impressive report naming a variety of good causes. Personally, I'm glad to see some of the funds going towards youth work which is a very necessary investment in all our futures.

The workshops were varied and interesting. I tried T'ai Chi and managed to stay on my feet (it's harder than it looks) although I nearly dozed off during the final relaxation session. Sr Minette



© Sr Jane Carter

went to a presentation by Sr Mary Holmes (the new Home and Overseas Secretary) on her new book, 'Elizabeth: The Feisty Feminist', detailing the campaigning of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, a Victorian feminist, suffragist and suffragette, not to mention a former pupil at Fulneck Moravian School. Is there a link?

Hall Green is a wonderful venue with hospitable people, not to mention excellent cakes, and Sr Minette and I were glad to learn that next year's rally will be held there once more. MWA Away Days, apart from concentrating on worship and the good works that receive support, are a happy, relaxed way to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. So, although we were a bit weary, the mood during the coach ride back to London was upbeat, no doubt helped by our coach driver's eclectic soundtrack including gospel, easy listening, country and reggae.

Thanks from Sr Minette and me for planning and organising this memorable event.

Sr Cynthia Dize
Fetter Lane

Provincial Day of Prayer: Monday 17th June 2024

Following the blessing that was our National Day of Prayer and Consecration on 6th January this year (see page 137 of the *Moravian Messenger* - December 2023), a further day of prayer will be held on Monday 17th June 2024.

Epiphany, 6th January seemed an appropriate day for this first special day and 17th June is truly another as this is the day in our church's calendar that we remember the same date in 1722 when our history and heritage reminds us of the beginning of the building in Herrnhut. On that day in 1722, Christian David cut down the first tree to build the first house in Herrnhut. Although we may not be

cutting any trees down this year, we will be coming together in prayer as a sign and symbol of the continued building of our church.

As the prayer for Memorial Day of 17th June reminds us, we acknowledge with thanksgiving and praise how God led a company of persecuted Christians to new beginnings and how we continue to place our trust into his hands, as the God of new beginnings, to lead us to a renewed life and a commitment to his service. May we grasp, as the prayer continues, the opportunities that are presented to us on Monday 17th June to love and serve others through our Provincial Day of

Prayer.

Congregations are encouraged to come together between the hours of 9am and 9pm in their own way, and there will be an online prayer gather for those who are unable to join locally or who may wish to gather virtually with sisters and brothers across the province and beyond.

The Zoom room details are Meeting ID: 836 8967 3764 and Passcode: 555158 for anyone wishing to join online during the day. Please pop in and out as you feel able!

Br David Howarth
Provincial Board

Born in 1928 in Oldham, Fred attended school at Westwood Junior. On the first day, by afternoon play time he had enough so when everybody lined up to go back into school he was at the end of the line, turned the other way and slipped through the gate and went home. At 11 he went to Oldham High School in 1940, a year after the Second World War began, and as they lined up on the first morning to go into school the sirens sounded so they turned around and went into the air raid shelter until the 'All Clear', beginning to make new friends there instead of in the classroom. In spite of the unpromising starts at both schools, generally he enjoyed the years in school, especially the two sixth form years.

From a young age, Westwood Moravian Church was an important part of his life. He eventually offered himself for the Moravian ministry and was accepted. That meant going to live at Fairfield College in 1947 and studying at Manchester University taking Arts and Divinity Degrees.

In 1952 he spent an academic year in the Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and after returning to England, he was ordained in 1953 and called to serve Bedford St Peters' Moravian Church. Whilst there he renewed his friendship with Sr Olive Eden who was then at college in London. This soon led to engagement and marriage five months later in 1956. They were then called to Gomersal, where they set up their first home, and Heckmondwike. In 1958 their son Michael was born.

In 1960 Fred and Olive were called to Salem and Gomersal where their daughter Catherine joined the family. They were called to Jamaica in 1962 and moved into their new home and Church at Bethabara near Mandeville, where the Circuit included Sharon, Patricktown and Broadleaf. Their daughter Alison was born there in 1964. By the end of that year, Fred started to go into Kingston to also help with student training. In 1965 they moved to Trinity Moravian Church and Fred became warden to Moravian students and taught Philosophy of Religion to all the students (from eleven denominations and many different islands). He was also minister of the Trinity Church, a large congregation of some 500 members and lots of young people so life was very full.



Br Fred Linyard
(1928-2024)

Christmas Day services were usually very early (Trinity was 5.30am) a relic of colonial times when enslaved people had to go to church before the working day began. Because of this early start, Fred never had the pleasure of seeing the children open their presents.

They left Jamaica in 1973 after eleven very satisfying years and returned to the British Province. After a short time with Olive's parents at Fairfield, they moved to Ockbrook to serve their congregation with Leicester. Looking after two congregations kept Fred busy. He also was asked to do some supply teaching at Spondon from time to time and to teach O Level RE at Ockbrook School, along with regular Assemblies.

In 1976 Fred was elected as a member of the Provincial Board. This meant moving to London - another big change, also for the children. As a member of the Provincial and Mission Boards, Fred served as Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary; he represented the Church on various Ecumenical bodies and served on a number of inter-Synodal Committees, concerning himself especially with the needs of Church Service and Faith and Order. He was soon elected on the Moravian Church Foundation's executive committee.

He represented the Moravian Church at a number of significant national religious events, particularly the service in Canterbury Cathedral during the Pope's visit and the consecration of Robert Runcie as Archbishop. Along with the Provincial Board work he took on the ministry of the renewed Harold Road congregation and enjoyed great satisfaction in building it up.

The children were now grown up and grandchildren became an important part of life - ten of them eventually.

After retirement, he continued to work with MCF until he had to leave when he reached 70. He also joined the Hospital chaplaincy, conducting Sunday morning Communion, always a moving experience, and visiting in the wards. On two occasions he served at Ockbrook as interim minister until a regular minister could be appointed, and he took services at a variety of churches in the Derby area. For some years he was asked to supervise and act as tutor to Moravian students. He continued as the editor for the *Moravian Messenger* and for some years was a volunteer at the St James Night Shelter and the Padley Centre. With Olive he also acted as an agent in the area for Traidcraft, supplying a number of churches and organisations with Fair trade goods. Out of church he sang with the Settlement Singers, was a member of Probus, at different times being Almoner, Speaker, Finder and President.

Fred was such a steadfast person all the way through, and in Ockbrook they had the privilege of having him around in his retirement. Life threw many challenges at him, but his faith was unwavering. The death of daughter Cathy was one of those challenges. And after Olive had a stroke and was moved to a care home, he went nearly every day to see her, until she died in 2021.

Fred was the constant voice of compassion and wisdom, at retired ministers' conferences and elsewhere. There was hardly any Sunday when Fred couldn't come to church or any church event. In recent years he was still happy to lead the occasional service in Ockbrook and Leicester.

Fred's influence in the Moravian Church spread far and wide and will be greatly missed by the brothers and sisters around the world.

'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Sr Jill Vogt, Co-Pastor of Herrnhut Moravian Church in Germany

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

I grew up in Massachusetts in the U.S., with an older brother and a series of cats. My father was the manager of a department store, and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. It was in many ways a stereotypical happy American childhood in the sixties and seventies.

How and when did you come to faith?

I grew up in church. We attended every Sunday and my parents held various leadership roles. I was confirmed at 14 in the United Church of Christ and also served on various boards and committees. Through my participation in a very active youth group as well as a very moving Confirmation retreat, I decided to consciously live my life as a Christian.



© Peter Dornan

What led you into the ministry, where did you train and where was your first Church?

I had a hard time actually deciding to go into the ministry, mostly because I had no real female role models to identify with. But a wonderful male pastor helped me find my own voice. I received my Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, spent four months at the Ecumenical Institute with the World Council of Churches in Celigny Switzerland, which is where I met my husband Peter, and then served 12 years as Pastor of a United Church of Christ church in Kittery Point, Maine.

What brought you into the Moravian Church?

My husband grew up as a Moravian in Königsfeld, Germany. After he finished his studies in the U.S., we came to Germany (with our two small children and a cat) in 2001 so he could finish his training for ministry. When he was done, I was asked if I would enter the service of the Moravian Church, so we then served as co-pastors of the congregation in Niesky for ten years before being called to Herrnhut as co-pastors eleven years ago. It was hard leaving the church I grew up in, but I have not regretted my decision, and have come to love the Moravian tradition deeply.

Tell us a bit about your doctoral studies and how quickly did you learn German?

I received my Doctorate of Ministry from Acadia Divinity College in 2018. My research involved looking at how the writing of 'Lebensläufe' (spiritual memoirs) can be used to build fellowship and improve small group dynamics. The Moravian tradition of writing spiritual memoirs to be read at one's funeral is still

practiced by German Moravians today and is a real treasure of our church. When we moved to Germany I knew very little German, but in the East few people knew English, so I had to just dive in. At first I was just happy when I actually received what I asked for when I went shopping. Then I learned how to express my feelings, which made friendships easier and more satisfying. Finally now it comes relatively naturally, although writing and grammar are still challenges.

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

I have done my share of wrestling with God especially when I was younger. As I have aged, I've developed more patience and an understanding that God's perspective on life is much larger than mine. I've also learned that God is not against me, but next to me when times are difficult.

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

I'm certainly not ready, but I'm not afraid. I've been present at several deaths and have always felt an incredible peace and power there. I do believe in the resurrection. I may not be able to explain all of it, but I definitely believe in it. I have no idea what it will be like, but I think God has great things planned for us and that our existence is not confined to just this life.

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

I love to read, especially novels. Music has long been an important part of my life and singing in our church choir brings me great joy. I don't watch films often, but two of my favourites are *Waking Ned* and *Goodbye Lenin*.

The place where you feel closest to God?

I feel closest to God in stillness and in nature. I love to go hiking and feel a strong sense of God's presence while looking out over a beautiful landscape. But more than anything, I love water. Sitting on the shore, or better yet sailing in a boat, not only makes me happy, but puts me in touch with a sense of God as creator.

What inscription would you like on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

Following the German Moravian tradition of having a Bible verse inscribed, I think I would choose: Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:38

Have you considered serving on a Provincial Standing Committees?
Some members offer some insight to their work and why they serve.

The Church Book Committee

The Church Book Committee is the first standing committee listed in Section 5 of the Book of Order, yet it is sometimes the forgotten committee. This committee comes into its own in a Synod year and as we are approaching Synod in July we are working hard behind the scenes.

In January, the Church Book Committee started its work, although during the inter-synodal period there may have been discussions with other standing committees and the Provincial Board regarding resolutions they may wish to bring to the Synod in order to standardise references to this in the Book of Order.

One of our first tasks is to update the nomination form for election to provincial committees at Synod. When this has been completed it will be sent to Church House for distribution to ministers and chairs of provincial committees. Half the members of each committee stand down each synod and will need to seek nomination again if they are able and wish to stand again. New nominees will need to offer to stand via a nomination form. If a member of a committee has

completed three terms (twelve years) on a committee (with no breaks) they are no longer eligible for re-election. A list of committee requirements is also passed to Church House as the Book Committee monitor eligibility to stand. There also may be a position for two years to take into consideration if there has been an early retirement of a member of a committee.

The Provincial Board will finalise the deadlines for the proposals, reports and nominations, and these are published in the *Moravian Messenger*. The Book Committee works to these deadlines to prepare agenda paper. When the deadline for proposals is reached, these are sent to the Book Committee to check the wording and compliance with the Book of Order. Also, proposals are checked to make sure that all parts of the Book of Order that it affects are considered in the proposals, thus causing no anomalies. If there are alterations the proposal is passed back to the proposer and seconder for adjustment and approval.

After Synod, the members of the Book Committee work from the minutes to produce the Book of Resolutions which is sent out to all ministers and deputies. This includes: a list of synodals, all the resolutions, which are divided into Class 'A' (those which affect the Book of Order), and Class 'B' (those which do not affect the Book of Order), as well as the results of all the elections to the Provincial Board and the various provincial committees and offices. When this has been completed and sent off to Church House for distribution, then the work of making the changes to the Book of Order itself begins (and this also involves changes to the index as appropriate). This can be a huge task if there are a lot of changes, and it can take some time before the revised edition is finished and sent to Church House for distribution to ministers.

I know there are other members of the Church who have copies of the Book of Order, and if you wish to have the updated version you will need to apply to Church House for this sometime in the Autumn.

Sr Gillian Taylor



Eve explaining the Prayer Spaces to the children

© Sr Sarah Groves

Prayer Spaces in Schools

Last year Gracehill Congregation was approached by Eve McMullan, the local Scripture Union Schools worker to see if we would host a Prayer Space for children at Gracehill Primary School. Like many schools Gracehill PS did not have enough spare room to host this in their own premises. Church Committee was happy for the Church to be used for this and we were intrigued to see how it would turn out.

Prayer Spaces in Schools has become an outworking of the 24/7 Prayer Movement and is now a really popular work in schools. The idea is to make space for creative reflection and prayer in imaginative ways. Prayer Spaces have been used in over 30 nations and over one million children and young people have participated in them. So, Gracehill was not doing anything new but following in an already well thought out path.

The Church was thought to be a better venue than the hall because the hall is used all through the week and it could be too disruptive to block its use for a number of days. The Church was also a logical place to encourage prayer!

So, the planning began - Eve planned the prayer stations and gathered together the items she would need, and just as importantly she asked people to pray and to volunteer as helpers during the three days the Prayer Spaces would be open. Teachers in school were very keen for the children to come along so a rota was organised for the classes to come into the Church - that is 14 classes in a two-form entry school and each class having around 30 children.

The Prayer Spaces were set up as prayer stations, places to reflect on what children wanted to give thanks for, what they were worried about, places in the world that they had family or had heard about on the news. Each station had an explanatory notice which explained the station and what the children could do at that place - there was a Be Still Corner where they could just sit and reflect with soft lighting, a Comfort Blanket area where they could wrap a weighted blanket around them and say a prayer for those who were feeling frightened in the world, a world map where they could put post it notes with short prayers or names of family who lived there, a hope rope where

they could untie knots and pray that God would untie the worry knots in their lives and a Tent of Dreams amongst a number of other stations.

The children came into the Church and Eve explained to them a bit about the stations and what prayer was and she also noted that they did not have to pray, they could just think about the situations and issues as well. So, the event was not about proselytizing but about allowing the children space to connect with the issues that affected them in a spiritual way and giving them permission to pray in new ways. I volunteered at the World Map and was amazed at the knowledge that the children had and how widespread their families were.

The children were totally engaged for the time that they were in Church and so well behaved - they respected the opportunity that had been given to them. The teachers were delighted with the children's responses and with the feedback that they got from the children on return to school. We collected up some of the children's responses 'The whole prayer space made me feel happy'; 'all the activities helped me learn of the different ways we can pray to God'; 'a prayer always means something'; 'I liked the knots of fear, it did make me calm and focus on that not my fears'; 'I feel more relaxed about talking to God'; 'prayer is important because it lets you talk to God and he can help you'.

It just so happened that at the end of the week I was scheduled to go into Gracehill Primary School to take Assembly. I used Jeremiah 33:3 God's telephone number and talked about how we can talk to God and how he listens to us. I gained lots of positive feedback from the children about the Prayer Spaces and we ended the assembly with a physical prayer version of St Patrick's breastplate.

I would love to share my experience with anyone who is interested in helping with or organising a Prayer Space in a school or for their own Church youth group. It is a great way to connect with God and with the young people around us.

Sr Sarah Groves

Minister of Gracehill Moravian Church

Mission and Society Committee

Who are we?

The Provincial Mission and Society Committee consists of the following members: myself, Sr Eunice Hoey, Br Alan Holdsworth and Br John Kilner (all members elected from Synod); Sr Sarah Groves (Bishop); Sr Lindsey Newens (Messenger Editorial Team); Brs Edwin Quildan and David Howarth and Sr Roberta Hoey (Provincial Board members). Since last Synod the committee have met four times. We normally meet via Zoom.

What is the purpose of the Committee?

Our purpose is to encourage the Church in carrying out the Five Marks of Mission namely:

- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
- To respond to human need by loving service.
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society.
- To safeguard the integrity of creation, sustaining and renewing the life of the earth.

What does the Committee actually do?

Not surprisingly, the committee are interested in the issues which are the burning issues affecting society today: Racial Justice, Family Poverty and the Environment. We have been exploring how our Church might play our part in bringing about positive change. The committee are looking at: a possible conference/meeting about family poverty; how we might celebrate the 75th anniversary of the arrival of HMT Empire

Windrush; and how our congregations might become more environmentally friendly. Sr Sarah Groves updates the committee on issues specific to Northern Ireland. We have also discussed how we might raise the profile of the Moravian Church. One way we have considered is asking members to pass on editions of the *Moravian Messenger* to family, friends and colleagues. It is a free magazine so would involve no additional cost to the congregations. We have also discussed how we can encourage people to volunteer to serve on our Provincial Committees and how congregations could be better prepared to welcome those people living with dementia into our worship.

Why did I join the Committee?

On a regular basis, we pray using the Lord's Prayer during private prayer times and at public worship. Each time we pray using this prayer we say these words: 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' When we say these words we are asking God's Kingdom to be actually present here on earth now. I don't believe we can pray those words without actually doing something to bring about God's Kingdom here on earth now. I understand that His Kingdom will never be fully present until Christ himself returns to earth, but I believe that our time on earth matters. I believe therefore that the Mission and Society Committee is for everyone. You don't need a special understanding of anything to serve on this committee. You just need to be enthusiastic about demonstrating the love of God to the world.

Sr Janet Cooper

The Lot and Scripture Cards

The 'lot' is a means much used in the older Moravian Church to obtain the guidance of God where certain important decisions were to be made. 'We resort to the lot to avoid self-interest and self-will in all matters and to allow everything to depend on the will of God,' said one early Moravian.

There were various methods of obtaining a decision by means of the lot. One method was to select one of three slips of paper: one with a 'yes' written on it, one with a 'no' and one, or possibly more one is told, neutral slips. These neutral slips were sometimes marked 'wait'. Alternatively, a positive and negative answer suitable to the question to be raised were written on separate slips. Each slip was enclosed in a similar container (see the tubes in the illustration). The question was asked, and the slip chosen at random. God was seen to guide the hand of whoever drew the slip.

Decision by lot has good Biblical authority. Examples appear in both testaments e.g Proverbs 16.33 and Acts 1.26. The contexts in these two examples clearly show that God guides the result. The lot used in Biblical times is likely to have been based on picking a stone, one of which was distinguished by being of a different colour, from a cup.

The lot was certainly used by the (pre-Zinzendorf) Unity of the Brethren. At the 1465 Synod guidance was sought as to whether the priesthood should be comprised of men ordained under the Roman Church or whether the Unity should ordain its own priests. The lot was drawn and an affirmative answer received to the second possibility.

Zinzendorf introduced the lot into the renewed Moravian Church at an early date (1727) when it was used to choose which of twelve elders should be chief elders; but this practice was not borrowed from the old Unity of the Brethren. It had previously been used by Zinzendorf as a recognised means of communicating with Christ. It was a known practice in early Protestant churches where Zinzendorf doubtless picked it up. Luther himself had approved of the lot, stating that 'God is so pious and just that he will not allow the lot to give the wrong result'. Zinzendorf's view was that it by-passed his own fallibility in discerning the will of God. He preferred a lot with a third neutral slip added so that God was not obliged to give an answer but could merely defer (hence the 'wait').

At first the Moravians used the lot

sparingly, mainly for filling posts. In 1741 the lot was used to ask Christ if he would become Chief Elder and the answer given was positive. Christ as Chief Elder was partly responsible for an increase in the use of the lot. It began to be used for relatively trivial decisions in Church meetings, where Christ was considered present (with sometimes a chair left empty for him) and also in deciding whether couples were suited for marriage. For many Moravians it was a custom to seek God's will through the lot before undertaking journeys, writing letters or any similar activity slightly out of the ordinary.



Tubes for the Lot slips and the Lot Box held in the Moravian Archive in Church House

Zinzendorf's attitude to the accuracy of the lot appears to have changed as its use increased. At first he considered it wholly binding on whoever had drawn it, but in later life he saw it, for the most part, as merely advisory. He took the view that its usefulness depended on the clarity of mind of the person drawing the slip. If one were anxious or worried then the result might be wrong. It seems from this and his observation that one must be wholly unbiased when the lot is drawn, that the drawer of the lot must be wholly open to the will of God. While this makes theological sense, human nature being what it is, the possibility was opened of recasting the lot if an unwanted answer was received.

After Zinzendorf's death objections to the use of the lot increased and, within the decade following, specific restrictions to its use were made. Further changes followed. After 1818 it ceased to be used in deciding whether couples, other than ministers and missionaries, were suitable for marriage. The marriage of ministers

was removed seven years later. After 1869 its use in filling appointments was restricted to bishops and missionary candidates. The use of the lot appears to have died out in the last decade of the 19th century, apart from as a means of selecting the verses for Watchwords. Its use was never actually banned but it ceased to be mentioned in Synod after 1889. While the use of the lot would probably strike most Moravians today as anachronistic it does show how intimate the early Moravians saw Christ's personal interest in and concern for their Church and its members.

'Scripture cards' or 'draw cards' are a boxed collection of cards containing Biblical verses. These were used not only by Moravians but by other Pietist Churches and Methodists in a number of ways. Sometimes a card was drawn for personal contemplation or by a group as a basis for a religious discussion but also used to offer guidance on a course of action where one's mind was unclear. Either the card would be seen as giving a clear answer, depending on the wording of the verse, or the verse on the card would set one's mind to work and assist in the decision-making process.

Hutton gives an example of this latter use in his *History of Moravian Missions* when discussing the events of 1732. The Moravians were at that time trying to decide whether a mission should be sent to the West Indies:

A meeting was held (July 16th); a box of Scripture passages was brought into the room; and Dober drew a slip bearing the words: 'Let the lad go, for the Lord is with him.' Thus was the final verdict given; and Dober made ready for his journey. But once again the Lot had to shape his plans. It decided, not only that Dober might go, but that his friend Leupold must stay at home. He chose another companion, David Nitschmann.

This use of the cards clearly relates back to the medieval practice of *sortes Biblicae*, whereby the Bible was opened at random, and the first verse read was taken to provide an answer to the problem on hand. It seems that two specific cards could also be selected whose meaning gave a clear yes or no, thus making each card similar to a 'yes' or 'no' paper slip. However, the use of these appears to have come to an end in the 19th century.

Adrian Wilsdon

With thanks to Lorraine Parsons, Moravian Archivist

CONGREGATION NEWS



© Br John Cooper

Cliftonville, Belfast

The Holy Week Readings were observed and on Maundy Thursday included a soup meal followed by Communion. The church was beautifully decorated for Easter Sunday and we thank Olga, Lorraine, Winnie and Vivienne for decorating the cross with cream roses. It was fixed on the wall by the church door for the following two weeks.

This year Lorraine provided gifts of a chocolate figure to the ladies on Mothering Sunday.

A group of members met for lunch together after Church on Sunday 21st

April at the local Golf Club and had a happy time of fellowship together. It was good to hear Br Stephen's broadcast service on Radio Ulster on 5th May when we could not have a service in church as the road was closed due to the marathon.

We are saddened again by the sudden death of Sr Sonya Anastassi née Pritchard on 25th April. Her funeral was held in the Church on 7th May. We express our sympathy to her brother Tony and nephew Marco and the family circle.

Sr Edna Cooper

Harold Road, London

After two years at Harold Road our minister Sr Christine Emanuel is moving on to Bedford. We will miss her.

She has led us well. It's not easy looking after a congregation without a church of its own. She has dealt with everything most professionally and constantly encouraged us. Her modest and humble approach is very powerful and her thoughtful and spiritual services have are always uplifting. We could not have wished for a better minister, and we wish her well at Bedford.

We are now looking forward to welcoming Sr Susan Quildan-Foreman as

our new minister. We will do our very best to ensure that you enjoy your time with us.

On Sunday 7th April, Jason Adu-Asamoah and Christopher Junior Unosye Mwaisango were confirmed. They have attended Harold Road all their lives and are both fine young men who represent the very best of the younger generation.

May the peace of God which transcends all understanding guide their hearts and minds, now and throughout their lives.

Br Michael O'Sullivan



© Br Michael O'Sullivan

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Provincial Diary for June

17	Provincial Prayer Day for Project 32	Online
18-19	Provincial Board Meeting	Church House
20	Church Service Committee Away Day	Crewe
22	Men's Fellowship Rally	Ockbrook

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Received into Membership

14th April 2024	Sylvia Anne Crompton	Royton
21st April 2024	Paul Benedek	Royton

Dates to remember!

5	World Environment Day (www.worldenvironmentday.global)
11	Shavuot - Jewish
16	Eid-ul-Adha - Muslim Father's Day
16-22	Refugee Week (www.refugeeweek.org.uk)
17	Renewal of the Brethren's Church: beginning of the building of Herrnhut by the immigrants from Moravia in 1722
21	Summer Solstice
22	Windrush Day
26	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (www.un.org/en/events/torturevictimsday/)

The Diaspora

We have a growing Diaspora list that we are in regular contact with. The members receive links to online church services and are kept up to date with all things Moravian by way of regular letters, newsletters, and the *Moravian Messenger*. If you or someone you know would like to be included on this list please contact Lindsey on 020 8883 3409 or lindsey.newens@moravian.org.uk.

Moravian Stars for Synod

As the cost of postage continues to soar, we are now taking orders for Moravian Stars for collection at Synod. Any purchased before 16th July can be brought to Synod for collection with no postage cost. In addition, we will be bringing a limited number of stars to purchase at Synod. If you would like to buy and collect at Synod please call Church House on 020 8883 3409 or email office@moravian.org.uk.



The following types of Moravian Stars are available from Church House:

- Indoor star (paper 60cm) £25.00 (without P&P)
- Outdoor star (plastic 68cm) £45.00 “
- Crib size star (paper 13cm) £21.00 “

Colours of both indoor and outdoor stars in stock are: white, yellow, red, red/yellow, and red/white. The crib size star is only available in two colours: white or yellow.

We also stock power supply cables for all three types of stars:

- Indoor star £10.00 (without P&P)
- Outdoor star £15.00 “
- Crib size star £15.00 “

Please contact Sr Gladys Korsah at Church House for more details.

Property to Let

A mid-terraced three storey, five bedrooomed stone-built house with stone slate roof and extensive private garden to rear with patio areas is available to rent at 62 Fulneck, Pudsey for £1,300 per calendar month. Applications forms and further details are available from the property agent, Mr John Forrester, at by telephone at 01772 421566, or e-mail at: info@johnforrester.co.uk. Applications forms to be returned to Mr Forrester by 5.00pm on Friday 7th June 2024.

Enquirer's meeting 2024

Serving Jesus Christ is a joy and makes this world a place worth living. Following Jesus is a blessing that we Christians have been given. Each path that God leads us on gives us new life, insight, and wisdom. God calls all of us in different ways at different stages in our lives. If you have reached a point in your life when you are wondering, 'what is the next step?' or 'Where is God leading me now?' If you find your heart being stirred as you attend worship, finding yourself restless sitting in the pews, or at home at your computer, and you feel something stirring you to go deeper in the work of the church, then it is probably time to start thinking through these thoughts with someone.

Exploring your call is an important task and should be done with others as part of a faithful conversation.

You are welcome, no matter at what stage in your discernment process you find yourself at, to join us in our enquirer's meeting. Members of the Church Service Committee are hosting an online event on Thursday 20th June 2024 from 7.30 - 9pm. Please pop in for a chat about where you are at, and we will be happy to be one stop along your discernment process. If you are interested, please contact joachim.kreusel@moravian.org.uk to get the link for the event.

We look forward to speaking with you and pray that you are willing and able to listen to God's voice calling you on in your Christian walk as you seek to follow more and more deeply Jesus.

Moravian Provincial Men's Fellowship

RALLY 2024

at Ockbrook Moravian Church,
Post Code DE72 3RJ

Saturday 22nd June 2024 at 1pm

Bring your own food. Tea & coffee will be available from 12.30pm

Subject: HOLY HABITS

An update and discussion on this subject and Project 32, including the 8 Essential Health Qualities

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