MARCH 2025

MORAVIAN MESSENGER

Looking beyond our limitations: Opening our doors to the people on the outside

Ballinderry Moravian Church is a small church, tucked down at the end of a road that leads nowhere really, except through Lower Ballinderry. People drive through Ballinderry, occasionally, but even that traffic is limited because of the highway that runs past Upper Ballinderry, which lies a few miles up the road in the other direction. It has a convenience store and a coal yard, a petrol station and an antique store and a large Church of Ireland church with its impressive, large stone bell tower perched high on the hill overlooking all of the surrounding lands. But that is the bustling metropolis of Upper Ballinderry, a little over two miles up the road.

Lower Ballinderry is a completely different creature. The church and the village have a step-out-of-time feel to it, almost like the last hints of the ancient past hold on still, obscuring the harsh busyness of modern life, like a low-lying fog rests soft against the fields, making little grey mounds out of the sheep that dot the landscape, seen, yet hidden; clear, yet obscured.

The church is a lovely, charming little Moravian Church with its manse attached to one end of the worship space, and on the other, an entrance gate where the girls school used to stand. On either side of the building is a generous garden, with our very own 'God's Acre' and playing field, an old stone shed used for storage, and a new plastic shed that now the Scouts use to store their equipment.

So lies Lower Ballinderry where no shops intrude, no commerce blemishes, no industry blights the gentle quiet of rural Ulster countryside. This is not to say that all things are peaceful and pleasant here, for no country village would be complete without its share of drama, and that we have in plenty.

Feelings run deep here, as deep as memory, and as wide as Lough Neagh, close upon whose shores Ballinderry is built. There are generations of families who live here still, holding onto the land year upon year, but these ancient folk slowly, grudgingly make room for the new ones who trickle in a few here a few there. One development made decades ago, stood alone for many years before the next one came into being. Over the last

(continues inside on page 28)

Holocaust Memorial Day *(page 30)*

Sikonge Hospital Exemption Programme - A Personal Story *(page 32)*

Archives and Heritage Committee Update *(page 32)*

Editorial

The Government has agreed a National Day of Reflection for those affected by the COVID Pandemic for Sunday 9th March. It is proposed that this happens in March every year.

I can hardly believe that it is now five years on from the start of the pandemic restrictions in the United Kingdom. In just a few days what had seemed at first to be a faraway problem suddenly came to our door, and the whole world changed. Staying at home, keeping our distance and fear entered our lives.

This meant the closure of schools, playgrounds locked, families cooped inside their homes with all the consequences of this particularly for women and children. Elderly folk became even more isolated with huge implications for their mental and physical health. Churches had to close their doors, and worship went online, and we all know the fall out from that as we still struggle to return to pre-COVID worshiping numbers.

There was very real bravery from those in the medical and caring professions. They were frightened, ill-prepared and yet they still went in to work in hospitals and care homes to care for patients. Those in hospital with COVID and with other issues were nursed under barrier conditions with no family allowed nearby. Some lived and tragically some died alone. Families were traumatised by grief and the absence of support from wider family.

So there is a great deal to reflect on. Of course, questions need to be asked but it is too easy to be cynical about our politicians. We were not the ones at the nerve centre of Government with the pressure of having to take vital decisions, almost in the dark. Now, we can look back and see how the pandemic unfolded and say 'if only we had done this instead of that' but the gift of hindsight only comes afterwards. I genuinely believe that most decision makers tried to take the best decisions in the light of what they knew. There are lessons to be learnt and broken hearts and lives still to be bound up.

The Day of Reflection in my mind at least should also be an opportunity to give thanks for all the goodness that did happen during COVID: medical and caring professions have already been mentioned; many found a quietness in their lives that had been missing for many years; Church ministers and priests found new skills and services, and pastoral work continued in new ways; the natural world around us began to recover as we travelled and consumed less.

However, the group that has received least recognition and thanks is, in my view, our Funeral Directors. In the midst of all of the confusion and horror of what was happening they just kept on working. They were unable to give the usual service to the deceased and for families, they could not ease grief or allow the familiar rituals that surround a death. Funeral Directors are people we all depend on, and they see life and death at its rawest and never was that truer than during the pandemic.

So do take the opportunity to pause on the National Day of Reflection and lift before God your prayers for those still affected and grieving, give thanks for all that has been learnt and pray for your local Funeral Directors, and let them know about your prayers; they will really appreciate it

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

WDP (World Day of Prayer)
press release for this year's service: *'I made you wonderful'* Kia Orana

Our sisters in The Cook Islands welcome us and lead us for the Day of Prayer 2025. This group of 15 islands in the South Pacific Ocean has a rich and colourful Maori heritage and a deep connection to nature. Join with us as we pray together and reflect on the theme *'I made you wonderful' (Psalm 139)*.

World Day of Prayer is an international, ecumenical organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast, the service begins with the writing country and theme being chosen a number of years earlier. Once written it goes to the International Committee in New York for translation and dissemination to the National Committee in each participating country. The service is then discussed and edited before being presented nationally, regionally and then locally for branches to make their plans. Finally, at a church near you, on Friday 7th March 2025, people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of The Cook Islands.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer, in native languages, travels throughout the world - through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later. A worldwide wave of prayer … For further information and resources, together with details of services in your area, see the WDP website: www.wwdp.org.uk.

Sr Maureen Colbert
Moravian Representative on the EWNI National Committee

Raising Faith Monthly

from the Youth and Children's Committee (YCC)

Our article this month comes to us from an Ecumenical connection, Rev. Rebecca Sparey-Taylor who ministers at Holy Trinity Trefnant Church, Denbigh Mission Area, St Asaph Diocese, Church in Wales.

Her insight into the value of a Toddler Church and how it has led to continued mission is inspiring and hopefully is something each church community can reflect on. Is it something that might be feasible in a context near you?

We thank Sr Rebecca for providing us with a hope-filled article of the power of working with families.

We hope this inspires you as it did us, your YCC Committee: Sr Katie Groves-Bond, Br Kieran Hopton, Sr Lol Wood, Sr Claire Maxwell, Sr Rachel Hamilton and Br James Woolford.

Prayers and Bears
- Church for Under 5s

Prayers and Bears started in 2021. I was fairly new in post, and Wales was coming out of COVID lockdown (which lasted much longer here than in England). We were aware that the previous incumbent had run a regular kids' club after school but none of the children that attended were ever seen at church.

So, we decided that we would start a monthly 'Toddler Church' i.e. a service that parents could bring their pre-school children, get to meet us all, and then hopefully when they started in school, if children were invited to events in church, then the parents would agree to bring their children having already met us. There were no local toddler groups, so we didn't need to make sure we didn't clash with them. So, Prayers and Bears was born.

We started at 9:30am with the doors open from 9am so that if parents were dropping off older siblings at the school next door they could come in and have a coffee whilst waiting for everyone else. Initially we started telling a bible story and then doing associated crafts, with a few toys available. Within a few months the school nursery was also attending but were often a bit late. So, we swapped the format around and have kept it the same since.

Now we start with free play and crafts. Each week there is a craft or two that they can make and take home. We also do our Big Picture. This is a craft that we all work on together that is put in 'our' window in church so that everyone can see what we have been doing. Then we tell the associated bible story, say a short prayer and then often have a song. The song is our own version of 'A hedgehog is very prickly' and each time we make up new verses to fit with our theme, so when doing Daniel and the Lions Den - a lion is very hungry or Daniel is very brave. We always finish with the same verse: Jesus is very loving.

Every year we worry that as we lose our families as they head off to school then we won't need Prayers and Bears anymore. But each year new families join. Our original intention was that families would come to future events if invited. However, this past week one of our first attendees, whose family started coming to church and mum was baptised and confirmed (dad already was), a little boy now six, has just become our altar server boy. Of our current cohort who are just about to all start in nursery in January the parents have asked that we run a group for school age children. So Prayers and Create has begun. Almost all of my helpers for this are parents and grandparents of previous Prayers and Bears families.

SUMMER CAMP 2025

Could you be a Summer Camp Leader or Support Staff?

Dates: 30th July - 4th August | Residential Event

We are seeking volunteer leaders for our 2025 Summer Camp, a fantastic opportunity to support and engage with young people (ages 10-18) in a faith-filled, fun environment.

1. Summer Camp Leader
(Working with Young People)

Are you passionate about sharing God's love with young people? We are looking for leaders to work directly with our campers, helping to plan and run games, activities, and film nights.

- No expectation to lead Bible Studies in your first year, but you will support sessions.
- Requires an active Christian faith.

2. General Camp Supporter
(Behind-the-Scenes Role)

Would you prefer to support the smooth running of camp? We need practical, reliable volunteers to help with logistics, ensuring young people are in the right place at the right time, and keeping spaces tidy.

Requirements for Both Roles

- Volunteer position - travel expenses covered.
- Attendance at pre-camp. meetings/training is required.
- Safer Recruitment process: application form, interview and two references (one from an employer/college or relevant experience).
- Safeguarding Training is essential: Basic training (two one-hour sessions) + role-specific camp training.
- A DBS check is required.

Why Volunteer?

- Gain valuable leadership and teamwork experience.
- Deepen your faith and positively impact young people's lives.
- Be part of an incredible, supportive community.

Interested? Contact Br James Woolford at ***james.woolford@moravian.org.uk*** to express your interest. Please share a little about yourself and your experience.

Not available this year? Let us know if you'd like to register interest for future camps!

Opening our doors to the people on the outside

(continued from front page)

few years these intrusions upon the solitude of the locals have come more and more frequently, for Ballinderry has changed its location, as the years have gone by. Rather, its location has changed in the minds of people. As Belfast fills up its allotment of houses and people are more willing to drive longer distances to work, accepting the cost of a longer drive as being a good bargain for the chance to have a quiet life in the country.

Ballinderry Church has been a small country church right from its founding by John Cennick in 1751. It is not a large cathedral. It doesn't even have a hall. It's a small country church, built for a small country village, and it has gotten on well over the years being just that, adapting to the changing times as necessity required. When the church partially burned down in the mid-19th century, we lost the girl's school, and part of the sanctuary, when it was rebuilt, it was done up in good Victorian fashion, dark wood paneling and pews nailed into the floor and hooked into the wall with a high pulpit at one end.

The lack of outbuildings or even a modern toilet has been a concern for the congregation over the years, and this lack has limited what was seen as possible for the congregation to do.

There are many ways of being Church together, worship is just one small fragment of what it means to be Christians together. What we do in worship has to have some real connection with the world around us or it becomes mere superstition and show. Genuine Christian worship is always connected with 'sending out' a purpose and a calling by God to replicate the truth of our experience of worship in the world around us. Jesus' love comes to life in our work together as the Kingdom of God comes to life in our hearts.

When I was sent to Ballinderry the limitations of space had confined the work of the church, and it chafed at the congregation. The congregation had a heart to engage with the ever-changing needs of the community outside of the doors, and together we worked out creative ways to move beyond the limitations of our physical space and do the work that their worship was calling them to.

Once we had established a time of worship where I could be at both Cliftonville and Ballinderry every Sunday, since my call as minister is only half-time in each, and the rest of the internal aspects of being church together got sorted out, there was a sense that God was calling us to do more, to take what God had given us and share it with those who needed that love who didn't even know it.

We began by starting something simple, the church, time immemorial, had a Spring sale/fair for the community. We expanded on what was already done outside in the Spring, and we brought it inside, pews or no pews, at Christmas time. We threw tabletops over the backs of the pews and had the stall holders stand or sit behind their tables on the pews and the people went up the central aisle.

It worked! People came, people loved having a local sale at Christmas time. It has become an important fixture in the annual calendar of the local community. As we continued to look for ways to express our faith within our community, we started a knit and natter group, a coffee morning group, a book club, and a movie night. We even began a once-a-month youth club with games, snacks, and conversation. Then COVID came and all of these things came to a halt, except, the committee and the congregation and I were not satisfied with that happening so, respecting the regulations and safe space protocols, began to think of ways of caring for the community through these hard times of isolation, Christmas baskets for the elderly, wood for those who needed heat, drive-in outdoor movie nights, and constant informal connection with as many people in the community as we could reach kept the church open, the community engaged, and the worship life rich, meaningful, and connected to Christ's call.

As restrictions lifted, we continued to engage with God's call to reach beyond our limitations to creatively engage with the community. Some of the programs started up as of old, some were left behind, and some new opportunities began to flourish. We were contacted by a para-church organisation who wanted to use our grounds to host a summer youth program, we agreed as long as we could be a part of it. We were delighted to be able to welcome in many young people from the community, most of whom we did not know. Some of the youth leaders from that summer program were so inspired by the work that was happening at Ballinderry that they volunteered to run a regular youth program for us.

Out of that work came other opportunities of outreach and community connections. People began to feel welcome in the church, seeing Christian love flourishing through the welcome and caring hospitality of our church community. All this time doing so much in a small church filled with pews, looking beyond our limitations to respond to the call God has placed on us, inviting us to find new ways of coming to life through faith and dedication and love.

In 2023, after speaking with a resident of Ballinderry, I was encouraged to contact the Scouts to see if it might be possible to start a group at Ballinderry. The obvious problem was that we had no space inside, on the other hand, we have wonderful grounds outside. The representative from the Scouts came, recognised the limitations of the space, and decided that where there are good hearts and good will it was worth trying regardless. So, with far too few volunteers signed up to run it, and no children in the church signed up for it, we decided to have an open day to see if there was any interest locally. When I arrived early for the open day, I was confused by the line of parents and children I saw standing in the rain, waiting for the church to open. The reality of what was happening took quite a few minutes to sink in as we opened up the church, and the people started pouring in. We had over a hundred people there that night and over 50 children signed up and over 10 adults volunteered to be Scout Leaders.

The group has continued to grow over the course of the year. The need for the church as more than a worship space finally overcame the hesitance of the church to change the interior. It is a beautiful church, it is beautiful with the pews in place, and it is beautiful now that they are moved. The Committee had been wrestling with this decision for many years, knowing that change was necessary, yet holding on to what they loved. When the church realised that what they loved about the church was not the pews, not how pretty it was, not the nostalgia, but Jesus and the family he has given to them in each other, and the work God has given them for the community; then the whole church realised that the pews had to move to make way for what truly mattered. The Congregational Council was called, the Church agreed, the pews were moved, the floor was fitted with new carpet, and practical, comfortable, stackable chairs were purchased. Ballinderry can now worship God in many ways with a great deal more freedom. We can worship God on Sundays with prayers and songs and sermons. We can worship God on Tuesdays when we gather around the table with strangers and friends. We can worship God through offering a space for children to safely gather and experience important mentorship and community through the work of the Scouts. We can worship God in more ways than we have yet imagined in this space, and as we follow the call, God will lead us beyond the limitations we still have as we continue this journey of faithful exploration.

This process has not been easy. Change is never easy and change for change's sake is never good. Letting space limit our imaginations and the calling of God is never good. Following, step by faithful step, where God leads us is very good indeed.

This journey has taken courage, resilience, time, energy, passion, love and true dedication to Jesus, the calling God has put on our hearts, and the dedication we have to one another and our church. This journey is not yet over and never will be while there is one soul at Ballinderry Moravian Church, willing to open their hearts to God's call to: 'love your neighbor as yourself.' (Mark 12:31)

Br Jared Stephens

Minister of Ballinderry and Cliftonville Belfast Moravian Congregations

Sr Margaret Capstick

(1932-2025)

Sr Margaret Capstick (formerly Margaret Hodgson) passed away peacefully on 21st January 2025 in her room at The Grove Care Home Pudsey with family members by her side. A long serving member of the Moravian Church Sr Margaret (nee Scholey) was confirmed in Fulneck at the age of 15 and lived for a brief period in the Fulneck community during the 1950s following her marriage in Fulneck Church to Kenneth Hodgson of Farsley. She continued her involvement with Fulneck amateur dramatics society, as the demands of her growing family allowed, following which the couple moved 'over Greentop' to their first family home.

As her three children grew more independent, she was involved extensively with voluntary service in the wider community and churches in Pudsey. She took charge of the running of the Darby and Joan Club and was one of the first lady delivery van drivers for the Women's Royal Voluntary Service delivering hot meals. She was a dedicated member of the local Save the Children Committee and helped with the establishment of an Abbeyfield Home in Pudsey. She was always there for her friends some of whom she kept from her school days at Pudsey Grammar School and was a constant and faithful visitor to the elderly and housebound.

Sr Margaret moved back to Fulneck in the 1990s living first in a cottage and then in an apartment directly beneath the church. Being so close to God suited her well. During this time, until she moved into residential care in 2018, she was an active member of the Fulneck community, supporting many different aspects of the life of the church and the school. She loved children and collected honorary grandchildren along the way as well as those of her own family. She delighted to serve in the Sunday School and various after-school clubs and activities. She loved flowers and enjoyed helping with the church flowers and serving generally to support worship. In 2003 at the age of 71 she qualified as a lay minister and served in this capacity for 14 years, preaching in other congregations in Yorkshire and Lancashire as well as Fulneck; and enjoying visits to the wider Moravian community in London, Ireland and mainland Europe. After the death in 2009 of Kenneth Hodgson to whom she was married for over 50 years, she re-married, finding new love with Jack Capstick in her 82nd year, until his death in 2017. She leaves her three sons and daughters in law, six grandchildren and eight great grandchildren, who will miss her dearly. Her loving kindness will be long remembered by those that knew her.

The Hodgson Family, February 2025.

Unity Prayer Day Offering 2025

Common Moravian Theological Curriculum in Spanish

Since our earliest days, the Unitas Fratrum has placed an emphasis on education, both vocational and theological. Today, there are Moravian seminaries and theological training centers across the world. These institutions are central to our ministry as a Church because they train the leaders of our Unity and give them the knowledge needed to serve our Chief Elder, our Lord Jesus Christ, in their respective cultural and political contexts.

Through this Unity Prayer Day Offering, the American Board of World Mission (ABWM) will work with the Unity Committee on Theology (UCOT) and Moravian leaders and educators worldwide to produce a common theological training curriculum that can be adapted and used throughout the Unity and starting specifically with our Spanish speaking partners. This curriculum will include training in the Bible and Biblical Languages, Theology and Church History, and Pastoral Theology. Specific courses will be identified with the support of UCOT and other partners, but some example courses are listed below.

1.The Bible and Biblical Languages

a. Greek
b. Hebrew
c. Old Testament
d. New Testament
e. Biblical Exegesis
f. Biblical Hermeneutics

2.Theology and Church History

a. Protestant Reform
b. Moravian Theology
c. Moravian History
d. Theology and Gender
e. Moravian Worship and Polity
f. Moravian Mission

3.Pastoral Theology

a. Vocation and Ministry
b. Worship and Liturgy
c. Evangelization
d. Pastoral Fundamentals
e. Pastoral Care
f. Administration Fundamentals

After drawing upon existing resources as well as creating what is needed - then each province will be provided this curriculum for use in their educational programming. Translations of existing Moravian resources like the Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum, The Ground of the Unity, Our Moravian Treasures, Covenant for Christian Living, the Bishops' Handbook, and more will also be provided. The goals of this effort are to better equip our clergy, to support our Moravian educational institutions, and to promote collaboration between different areas of the Unity.

1. **Equipping our clergy:** By providing a common curriculum, we will expand the tools our clergy have to educate themselves and their congregants. We will also remove one barrier to education for those who are far from an existing seminary and are interested in beginning new theological education efforts.
2. **Supporting our Moravian educational institutions:** By creating new curriculum and translating existing resources, we are removing some of the burden from our institutions, which are already working hard to educate our Moravian leadership. They will simply be able to receive the provided curriculum, adapt it as they see fit to meet the needs in their own areas, and use it in their courses.
3. **Promoting collaboration throughout the Unity:** With Moravians in all Spanish-speaking areas having the option to work from the same curriculum, we will be able to have cross-partner conversations beginning from a common framework. As different Provinces address issues in their own areas, this framework will allow us to identify commonalities that may allow for collaborative solutions. (In 2022, the ABWM brought leaders from all Spanish-speaking Moravian areas together for a Moravian Resources Conference. Through hearing the same presentations and receiving common Moravian resources in Spanish, leaders were able to identify topics where they had a shared experience or could learn from each other.)

Costs associated with this effort are listed below.

1. Staff time: ABWM and other members of the Unity will dedicate many hours to this effort on the organization and compilation of the curriculum.
2. Translation: It is important that materials are translated well for best use by students around the Unity.
3. Printing and distribution: Materials will be accessible online via PDF but many resources will also need to be printed and shipped.

Thank you for your support of this Unity Prayer Day Offering, which will certainly support and equip the global ministry of our Moravian Unity.

Holocaust Memorial Day

© Mairi McCurdy

'At times this world seems very dark, internationally, nationally and individually.' Those were Sr Sarah Groves words in her Editorial of last month's Messenger. This can indeed be said of almost any period in history. January brought Holocaust Memorial Day, when one of the darkest times of Germany's history was commemorated.

I was born during World War II and grew up in a divided Germany. Although I obviously do not myself remember much of the early years of my life, I learned a great deal from my mother who had to care for the family - consisting of four young children and her own mother who had lost everything in the allied bombing of Hannover - while my father was at the front.

As a young girl, my mother had started her employment in the office of Herr Lazarus, head of a finance company. As the name indicates, the family were Jewish. Herr Lazarus was a caring employer, and my mother was treated with kindness and encouragement, as were all his staff. The relationship with the family was close and when Herr Lazarus heard that my mother was planning a holiday at the seaside with friends, he asked her if they would include his young daughter in the group. This was agreed and photos of that time show that it was a happy holiday for all of them.

Sometime later my mother met my father. After their marriage, she gave up her employment and lost touch with the Lazarus family. What had become of them in the final years of the war was revealed in the documentation of concentration camps. Herr Lazarus died in Auschwitz. His wife had been transported to a camp in Riga, Latvia, where she died. Details of their daughter are unknown. Today, two 'Stolpersteine' (or Stumbling Stones) in the pavement in front of their former home, commemorate Herr and Frau Lazarus. It is a simple but stark memorial for the family and a reminder of the importance of tolerance, respect and love for all.

Sr Monika McCurdy
University Road Belfast

'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Br Michael Newman

Br Michael is the minister of Hornsey and Fetter Lane Moravian Churches in London and serves as a part time member of the Provincial Board.

Tell us a bit about your background, family, education etc.

I am the eldest of three brothers, and was born in Swindon where we lived until my dad became a minister, after which we moved to Baildon and then Fairfield. I was quite academic and went to Oxford University to study Physics, after which I became a management accountant at Stagecoach Bus. I married Claire in 2000, and we have two grown-up children, Daniel and Ethan. I have always enjoyed sport and still play five-a-side football once a week.

How and when did you come to faith?

Church has always been part of my life, as my parents and grandparents are/were all faithful church servants. My own faith has been a journey influenced by new experiences and insights. When I was younger, perhaps because of my interest in science, I wanted to know all the answers, but as I have got older, I am much more comfortable with uncertainty and the mystery of God.

What led you into the ministry, and how did you hear God's call?

With a dad and aunty who are ministers, I guess it runs in the family! There wasn't one specific moment, but there was much reflection and encouragement from others. I was still at university when I first met with the Church Service Advisory Board, and they suggested that I wait and get some life experience first, which I did, and the sense of call remained.

Where and how did you train?

I studied Contextual Theology full-time at Luther King House in Manchester. This included ecumenical placements in the first two years, with an Anglican church and a group of URC churches, and a major placement with Br Philip Cooper at Wheler Street and Royton in the final two years. This was all good experience for my first call to serve at Baildon and Horton.

What has been your greatest joy so far in ministry and what do you struggle with?

I have always found it rewarding being able to work with others to develop projects, such as Wellbeing Wednesdays at Gomersal with Sr Victoria Wright, or the children's activity days with the Salvation Army in Chelsea, building on the work of Sr Claire Maxwell. As a naturally shy person, I have to push myself in certain aspects of leadership and this can be a struggle at times. Balancing congregation ministry with the work of the Provincial Board can also be a challenge, as there is so much more to it than the main two-day meeting each month, so I am grateful for the understanding of the Hornsey and Fetter Lane congregations.

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

I don't know that I have been angry with God, but I do sometimes wonder why things happen, whether it is an issue I am dealing with directly, or what we see going on in the wider world such as violence, wars and the devastating impact of climate change. The news is so often full of hatred and darkness, and in those times, it is important to find the glimpses of God's love and light that are always around us.

Are you afraid to die, or can you look beyond death, and do you believe in a resurrection?

I don't worry about dying. I have learnt to appreciate each day as a gift and to make the most of the opportunities it brings. What happens after that is in God's hands. I do worry about those who will be left behind. It is a privilege as a minister to walk alongside families before, during and after a funeral, and the Church can be a place of great support and comfort.

Why are so many people turning their backs on the Church?

Recently, we have seen stories of abuse in the Church of England, but such stories are not limited to one denomination, and they damage the reputation of the Church as a whole. Our last two Provincial Synods endorsed statements on inclusivity and safeguarding, and I hope and pray that we can make all our churches places where everyone feels welcome and can find a safe space.

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

My favourite bands are Orbital and The Chemical Brothers, both of whom I have seen live, but I also enjoy classical music. I often listen to audiobooks as I travel around London, and one of my favourites is *The Satsuma Complex* by Bob Mortimer, which resulted in some spontaneous chuckles on the Victoria line. My favourite film is *The Matrix*, and my favourite series of films is the *Dark Knight* trilogy. For my postgraduate diploma, I wrote an essay about superheroes and how through their struggles, choices, and motivations, we can relate to them and find inspiration.

The place where you feel closest to God?

When we lived in Fulneck there were lots of countryside walks on our doorstep, and this was a real blessing during COVID when we were allowed our daily exercise. Seeing the beauty and power of nature reminds me of the breadth and constancy of God's love. I also think that old church buildings are special places, as you feel connected to those who have worshipped there in the past.

What inscription on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

I wouldn't want anything more than my name, age and date of death. This is a Moravian tradition that I especially value for the equality that it symbolises.

Sikonge Hospital Exemption Programme - A Personal Story

Zacharia and Mwaka got sick with malaria but got free treatment at Sikonge Mission Hospital through the exemption program supported by Moravian brothers and sisters in UK.

Agnes cannot stand on her legs, so she moves around on all fours with flip-flops on her hands. She was born that way just as she has only been able to speak more than a few words with great difficulty. Today she is a grown woman and mother of five children - two girls and three boys from two to twelve years old. She lives in the outskirts of the village of Sikonge in Tanzania together with her husband Daniel. Daniel can only walk slowly with his homemade walking stick after he got into an accident with a cow when he worked as a shepherd. The family struggles to make ends meet but gets by through a combination of Agnes begging at the village market and their small rice field.

Football and sweet tea

One day in November 2024 Agnes and Daniel noticed that their ten-year-old son Zacharia was laying on his mat inside their small hut not playing football outside as usual. His younger sister Mwaka did not want any sweet cardamom tea although she usually loves it. An hour later both children had burning hot foreheads and glassy eyes - they were sick with a high fever. The family had no money and did not know what to do. A neighbour told them that Sikonge Mission Hospital has a programme that gives free treatment. They took the children to hospital. A nurse checked the children's vital signs to check how serious their conditions were. There was no immediate danger, so she took them to the social worker. The social worker talked to Daniel about the family's living standard and their social network. The discussion was based upon the hospital's policy and criteria for exemption, but as usual the social worker got the needed information through friendly conversation. In this case, he did not have to talk to Daniel for more than a few minutes and also looked at the children's clothes before granting full exemption. One of the hospital's doctors examined Zacharia and Mwaka, did some tests and soon the laboratory sent the results back to the doctor: both children had malaria. The doctor started the treatment right away. After less than a week Zacharia was back to kicking the homemade ball made of bamboo-strings around, while Mwaka drank her favourite sweet cardamom tea - both healthy again.

The Programme

Sikonge Mission Hospital is owned by the Moravian Church in Western Tanzania. The exemption programme is supported by The British Mission Board and Young Peoples Missionary Association. The programme gives free procedures and admission to all pregnant women, children under five years, and persons with epilepsy, sickle cell, leprosy or mental illness. Besides those groups, the programme gives free treatment to individuals that cannot pay due to poverty.

© Sr. Mia Toldam Korsgård

Support

You can support the Sikonge Hospital Exemption Programme by donating through your local YPMA representative or by sending donations to Moravian Church House in London.

Mia Toldam Korsgård

Missionary, Sikonge Mission Hospital, Moravian Church Western Tanzania

Mia is engaged by the Danish Mission Board and based in Denmark but visits Sikonge frequently to maintain the Programme.

Archives and Heritage Committee Update

© Sr Jayne Brewster

A presentation by Janet Warr

The beginning of a new year is always a time of taking stock, as well as looking forward to the future - which pretty much sums up what we, in the Provincial Archive and Heritage Committee are all about.

2024 was a busy year for us, with meetings on Zoom, a memorable face to face day and our first representation at Synod. It was good to set up a tabletop display there and finally explain to everyone what we had been up to for the previous two years! It was, we are happy to report, well attended and received. Sr Jayne Brewster was re-elected to the committee, for a term of four years, and we have since been discussing the possibility of co-opting specialist experts as required for specific projects. So, if you have a particular skill set that you feel might be of value, or an interest in our archives and heritage, please do get in touch on our new e-mail, PAHC@moravian.org.uk, and we can keep you in mind.

The lack of a procedure for sorting out what happens to archives and artefacts when a building closes was addressed, and a draft process has been drawn up. Amongst the suggestions was the digital capture of church interiors, to preserve them for posterity - a great example of using the technology of the future to conserve the past.

A recurring theme throughout the year was the lack of storage space throughout the province for archives and artefacts, and we continued our search for appropriate rooms and buildings. This is something that will certainly continue to occupy us in 2025, as is the pursuit of Records Location forms, to clarify what archives we already have and where. We now only have seven records outstanding - one the responsibility of a rather red-faced member of the committee!

In September we held a fun and productive face to face meeting at Fairfield, where, amongst other business, we reviewed the year's Heritage Open Days and enjoyed an enlightening presentation by Sr Sarah Groves on the confirmation of Gracehill as a World Heritage site. Highlights of the day included a fascinating tour of the church and Settlement followed by a wonderful spread of refreshments. Many thanks to Srs Janet Warr and Barbara Derbyshire for their generosity as hosts.

And so on we go, with energy and optimism, into 2025. I'm off to sort out our Records Location form ... yes, the red faced one was me!

Sr Jayne Brewster

Archives and Heritage Committee

Glass Fragments of War

During November (Remembrance tide) last year a Fr Brendon Bedford contacted Br Livingstone Thompson, minister of University Road and Kilwarlin Moravian Churches to tell him that 'a former rector of our parish (later a bishop) in the 1940s was serving in the United Kingdom during WWII in the Canadian Army as a chaplain'.

When the Reverend Harold Appleyard was appointed rector of Christ Church, Meaford in 1938, he looked forward to a lengthy tenure. However, the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and the terrible news of young men from Meaford dying overseas brought about a change of his plans. Signing up as a military chaplain in 1941 with the rank of (honorary) captain, Appleyard soon found himself posted to an embattled southern England.

The destruction appalled him: homes, factories, schools, and so many churches. Almost immediately he began to collect shards of stained glass from the shattered windows of damaged churches. It was his intention to create memorial windows for his Church in Meaford from these fragments of glass.

He collected and carefully labelled bits of glass from scores of churches in England, large and small. Then, when his regiment moved to the continent in 1944, in the wake of the D-Day invasion, he continued his quest in France, Belgium and Holland. It was usually possible to get permission from the church to remove the bits of seemingly unusable glass, and his diaries often refer to vicars or vergers giving him pieces for the memorial windows.

When the war ended in 1945, Appleyard, now a major, returned to his Meaford parish. It was a proud day for the people of Meaford when a stage was erected in front of the Meaford Town Hall for the Governor-General, Lord Alexander of Tunis, to award the local Anglican rector the Military Cross for 'calm courage, disregard of his own safety, and steadfastness of purpose'. It was a proud day for Appleyard as well, because his father had been awarded the same medal in World War I.

Then on 11th August 1946, the memorial windows were unveiled by Mabel Randle and Winnie Hackett, two mothers in the parish who had lost sons in the war. The church was packed, and the service was broadcast live on CBC radio and later in the British Isles and Europe.

Today these windows stand as a memorial to local men who paid the ultimate price of war. They contain many tiny pieces of coloured glass from some 125 English and Welsh churches as well as a few from Ireland, France, Belgium and Holland. With shards as old as 700 years or more, they are among the oldest glass on this continent.

© Christ Church Anglican

Fr Brendon noted that 'A piece of the Moravian Church (Belfast)'s glass is included within the memorial.' We have discovered that the piece of glass comes from Cliftonville Moravian Church which was damaged in an air raid in April 1941. Sadly, it is not now possible to identify that piece of glass made into the Memorial window as some of the original labelling was lost.

Fr Brendon wrote these windows 'are a wonderful metaphor of the new life, hope, and beauty that is possible in God, even in the face of destruction and devastation, especially as some of the church buildings represented are no longer standing'.

The full story of these wonderful memorial windows can be found on the Church's website: https://christchurchanglican.ca/pages/wwii-memorial-windows.

Sr Sarah Groves

Minister of Gracehill Moravian Congregation

CONGREGATION NEWS

Baildon, Yorkshire

It has been a bittersweet time at Baildon recently. We were so happy to welcome back Br James Woolford after a period of ill health and he led us into Advent with hope and enthusiasm. Members participated in Choral singing and poetry in the District Advent service with the Moravian Singers, held this year at Gomersal and Sr Maria Hanson and Glynis Wilkinson performed a beautiful duet, 'In the bleak midwinter'. Our 'Baildon at Christmas' event, shared with the whole village, was as busy and successful as always and during the day, 'The Minister of Magic' aka James, performed a great magic show with a Christian message. Our services over the festive period were joyful and well attended. Christingle was especially memorable as we were visited by a camel who carried one of the wise men. He was very informative and told us how Jesus was for everyone, everywhere. I hope he returns to see us next Christmas! Edward Woolford also sang a lovely solo.

We were very saddened however by the deaths of two of our dearly loved members. After a few months of deteriorating health, Sr Libby Mitchell was called home. She has been a vibrant member of our congregation for many years, touching the lives of so many and well known throughout the province for her work with Summer schools, church tours and the MWA. We feel her loss in the church and privately too and the church was packed to the rafters for her funeral service just before Christmas, which indicates how much she was loved by so many. Then in January again after a period of illness, our friend, church committee member and regular worship leader, Br David Crompton passed away. David was a quiet, deep thinker with a fund of fascinating stories which we will greatly miss. He was loved and respected as a former schoolteacher and prison visitor.

© J. Singleton

Sr Ruth France

Hornsey, London

© Br Michael Newman

Christmas is well and truly over for another year, with all the decorations safely packed away and we're already one month into the new year. The Hornsey congregation has many happy memories of the Christmas celebrations we have shared in over the festive period.

The main highlight from this festive season was the Christmas Dinner and Dance which was held in the hall, organised by Sr Sonia Pessoa and Sr Patricia White. It was a wonderful occasion, enjoyed by all, with many of our church members who also brought along friends and family. It is lucky we have a large hall as there were around 100 people, a lot of tables and chairs and of course, space was needed for a dancefloor. Thank you to all who donated to the raffle creating an impressive array of prizes. Br Carl Skepple was our DJ for the evening, providing a broad selection of music for all to dance to, with the dancefloor being full most of the evening. As always, the food was delicious and a big thank you to Sr Sonia and her team in the kitchen for putting on this spread. The evening raised over £1,000 for church funds.

Part of the enjoyment of Christmas is joining together to sing Christmas carols. We held our service of Nine Lessons and Carols on Sunday 15th December, led by Br Newman, sharing the reading of the lessons taking us through the Christmas story. The singing continued later that week when we joined forces with Hornsey Churches Together for carol singing outside Sainsbury's and were accompanied by London Metropolitan Brass. There were more carols at our Christingle service, which was led by Br Edwin Quildan, and some of the music was provided by the steel band. The service had a real family feel to it, as many of our church members brought family and friends with them who enjoyed receiving their Christingles.

On 12th January, we had the pleasure of welcoming the family and friends of Imani King-Yombo and Isaiah Jeffrey-Parkinson for their infant baptisms. They are the great grandchildren of one of our longstanding members, Sr Muriel Jeffrey. The church was full, and it was very special to be joined by Sr Muriel, who hasn't been able to get to church for a long time due to ill-health.

We are looking forward to 2025 and all the events we have coming up and wish you all a Happy New Year.

Sr Claire Newman

Dukinfield, Cheshire

We thought it was about time we let you know just what has been happening with the Food Hamper Outreach Project during the past year.

For anyone who is unsure how this Project operates unlike food banks, individuals cannot access goods directly but must go through local Social Services and local Child Support teams. We consider this is the fairest way to ensure that the people who need the help most, receive it. We started 13 Christmases ago with donations to 12 families considered to be in need. This year, the number of families helped was 60. This cannot be achieved without YOUR help, so thank you one and all for everything you do.

Needless to say, all families receiving our help, do so anonymously. We have no idea where our gifts are going - and rightly so!

We have continued to provide food, toiletries, hygiene and cleaning products, as well as passing on donated bedding, towels and clothes that will be useful to the families we support.

In March, we collected 200 Easter Eggs plus other Easter gifts, and these were delivered via Social Services, to children in the area.

Our Spring Appeal brought in a large selection of pre-loved clothes for all the family that would be suitable for the summer months.

Pictured are the 50 bags containing food for children who would not be able to depend on school dinners for nourishment during the summer holiday. This initiative came about from two couples who are members of the church and who were celebrating their Golden Weddings (50 years). They had no need for gifts and so decided to ask for money to provide this giving. Over £1,000 was raised.

© Dukinfield Congregation and Scouts

As a way of saying a special 'thank you' to all our supporters and workers, a successful afternoon tea was held, when we heard from the leaders of various Social Services groups who are on the receiving end of our giving. They told us stories, some funny, some touching of the families who receive from us.

Our third annual Coat Appeal began in September. As well as winter coats, we were happy to accept jumpers, hats, gloves, scarves - in fact anything to keep the cold weather out. We stopped counting after 350 coats were received. Donations still kept on arriving, but we really don't need any more until next Winter! Thank you.

During the Harvest season, we received gifts from our Moravian Harvest plus local schools: Cromwell, All Saints, Yew Tree, Ravensfield. Local churches also gave.

Until August, grant funding was slow in arriving, but things began to improve. We were so happy to receive a cheque for £2,000 from Asda.

In November, we gave out lots of chocolate Advent Calendars.

A wonderful initiative was thought up by our Scout Group 5th/7th Dukinfield: it was entitled THE TWELVE WEEKS OF CHRISTMAS. Each child was asked to donate one item of food from a list of 12 each week for twelve weeks. Not only were items received from our lads, but from the Dementia Warriors Group, the Mums and Tots and our congregation. Over 650 items of food were delivered and displayed. With grateful thanks to everyone. All these items will be used to help local families during the next few months.

Finally, 60 hampers were organised just before Christmas. Needless to say, the Food Hamper Team, work 52 weeks a year to provide support to local families. Christine, Nigel, Margaret, Keith and Bob want to thank everyone who has supported us during 2024. The work carries on.

Sr Sue Selby

Gracehill, Northern Ireland

Saturday, 30th November heralded an early commencement of Christmas activities in Gracehill with the MWA's annual Coffee Morning. Seasonal harp and piano music provided the perfect ambiance as an enthusiastic turnout from the congregation and wider community enjoyed a creative selection of festive treats. All proceeds were for MWA charitable projects. The ladies were also delighted to include the raffle hamper (won and kindly regifted by Sr Kathleen!) as part of our highly successful Women's Aid Christmas Appeal selection of immensely generous gifts from Gracehill congregation.

Tables were again filled with laughter and an overarching sense of joy at the beautiful 'Carols By Candlelight' service on 6th December. This evening of music, readings, reflections and a very pleasant supper was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

The children of our congregation excelled on the fourth Sunday of Advent with a marvellous costumed presentation, 'The story of Christmas', dramatically celebrating the arrival of Jesus on earth. Their enthusiasm and openness of expression were testament to commendable hard work in rehearsals and to the great dedication of our Children's Church leaders.

Undoubtedly, the traditional highlight of the season for many people is the beloved Christingle celebration held on Christmas Eve at 3pm. This year, the church was packed once again, with the popular and very faithful Ballyduff Silver Band leading worship. Before the glow of dozens of Christingles illuminated the building, songs and readings were provided by the children and Rev Kiran Young Wimberly and her two daughters gave a captivating musical rendition of 'Mary, did you know?'

On the morning of Christmas Day itself, the family service of thanksgiving was led by Bishop Sarah and was well-attended by high-spirited members of all ages from the congregation.

After a truly blessed and vibrant festive season, Gracehill congregation now looks forward eagerly to experiencing the fullness of God's grace in all new adventures and challenges to come in 2025:

'For I know the plans I have for you…plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'. (Jeremiah 21:11 (NIV))

Sr Ruth Johnston

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Baptisms

12th January 2025	Imani King-Yombo	Hornsey
12th January 2025	Isaiah Jeffrey-Parkinson	Hornsey

Received into Membership

19th January 2025	Graham Lock	Bath Weston

Deaths

17th January 2025	Anthony Roy Harvey	Ockbrook

NOTICES

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Provincial Diary for March

1	Lancashire District Conference	
3-4	Provincial Board Meeting	Church House
19	Finance & Property Committee	Online

DATES TO REMEMBER

1	Founding of the Brethren's Church in 1457 Unity Prayer Day St David's Day
2	Church Action on Poverty Sunday ***(www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday)***
4	Shrove Tuesday
5	Ash Wednesday
7	Women's World Day of Prayer ***(www.wwdp.org.uk)***
8	International Women's Day ***(www.internationalwomensday.com)***
13	Purim - Jewish
14	Holi - Hindu
17	St Patrick's Day
20	Spring Equinox
25	UN International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade ***(www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/)***
26	Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Power/Destiny) - Muslim
30	Mothering Sunday Ramadan ends: Eid-ul-Fitr - Muslim Summer-time begins

LABRADOR
Church Events

© Br Robert Hopcroft

Continuation of Br Hopcroft's memories following his call to Labrador in 1971

As School Principal and church members, Wendy and I were often invited to special events and one of those was to the wedding of a young couple whom we had got to know. We attended the wedding service, with three bridesmaids, and we had been invited to the bride's parent's home for two o'clock in the afternoon. When we arrived at their small house it was full to the brim with guests. We were served dishes of caribou, duck, partridge and piles of boiled vegetables followed by homemade desserts. After about an hour it became clear that it was time to leave. As we were leaving there was a queue of more guests waiting to come in. We discovered that it was the custom at that time, because of the smallness of most of the homes, that the first sitting was for close family, the second sitting (including myself and Wendy) was for honoured guests followed by a sitting for cousins, nieces and nephews and finally, anyone else known to the family came and joined in for a final meal. The bride and groom were expected to remain throughout and eat something at every sitting! I'm not sure whether this custom still prevails.

© Br Robert Hopcroft

While I was quite used to leading whole school morning assemblies, I was approached early in the year by Rev Seigfried Hettasch, minister of the Moravian Church in Nain to see whether I would be willing to conduct a church service in the summer while he and his wife Frieda were away on furlough in the UK. It was to be an evening service, in July conducted in English - so still months ahead. I said yes with trepidation, but I had plenty of time to prepare! Br Hettasch's only advice was that the sermon should be no shorter than ten minutes and no longer than 15 minutes. As the day approached I began to make my preparations. Choosing the hymns was no problem: I just went with my favourites. I used the textbook readings which were from Psalm 139 and 2 Corinthians. I wrote out my first sermon in full and rehearsed it in front of Wendy while she sat at the far end of the room. With a few adjustments I got it down to 12 minutes. The day arrived and we set off for Church. Isn't it amazing how many things that you have experienced suddenly fail you? Questions like: do I tell people when to sit? When do they take the collection? Do I take it from the Chapel Servants or do they place it on the Communion table? At the end of the service, do I just walk out or sit down? I wish I had taken more notice! Well, I got started with a congregation of about 30. I was nervous and my mouth was dry, my knees were shaking but my voice was fine. I was relieved when I pronounced the benediction and made my way down the aisle to greet people. Everyone said how much they had enjoyed it. What a relief!

When we got home Wendy's first reaction was 'What Happened? You ran through the sermon like a steam train, hardly pausing for breath and it was all over in less than eight minutes!' I vowed I'd never do it again.

The Jewish expression: 'Man plans, and God laughs' came to mind.

More than 50 years later, I guess God had other plans!

Br Bob Hopcroft

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@davebull.co.uk

Printing & Distribution
G. R. Walkden
Tel 01253 681338