SEPTEMBER 2025

MORAVIAN MESSENGER

Wild Church
- A Spirituality of Nature

© Sr Lorraine Shorten

Wild Church is a relatively new style of worship; it follows on from the Messy Church model but really it is older than church itself! Worshiping God in nature is the most basic and natural form of worship.

Wild Church, Forest Church, Wild Worship, whatever you prefer to call it is all about discovering God in nature. God is not only in church on Sunday mornings but can be found outside in the fields, mountains, woods and even in your back garden. God will reveal Godself through the invisible things, we need to curate a space and attitude of listening and looking.

Cate Williams writes, *'Many people find that their most profoundly spiritual moments occur outdoors, in nature … We are living in a society that is increasingly urbanized and dominated by technology. There is nothing inherently bad about this, but the balance is wrong when we have lost connection with the natural world.'*[1]

I have led a few Wild Church sessions, in Birmingham and Bath. It is important for people to be aware that they are not coming to a regular church service outside. Yes, we have prayers and possibly a short talk, but it isn't a sit and listen to a sermon and sing hymns. Steve Chalke says, *'venturing into the fresh air inspires us to see life differently … to put our lives into perspective and discover new depths to our understanding of and relationship with the God of all creation.'*[2]

A topic for the session is chosen and planned in advance, it could have a seasonal theme, or a follow a Bible story. After a short gathering prayer, an introduction and explanation is given. For example, in the scripture passage Matthew 6: 25-32 we read, *'Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.'*

Open questions and activities are then offered for people to choose from and explore their feelings and senses on the passage, or they could just sit in the presence of God quietly by themselves. Questions we can ask are, 'What beauty can you find in nature? What is God showing or telling you in the treasure?' Open questions like these help us explore and open up ourselves to listening to and looking for God in nature.

(Continues inside on page 100)

Celebrating a Decade of World Heritage in Christiansfeld
(page 99)

Mission Possible - Summer Camp 2025
(page 100)

Forever Fulneck: Stories Across the Generations
(page 101)

Editorial

What is truth?' asks Pilate in John 18:38. I struggle, as I think many others do with the issues that are playing out in Israel/Palestine today. Is there a famine in Gaza or not? Is the war in Gaza justified or is it genocide? Who is telling the truth in this conflict?

As a teenager I had an idealistic view of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people after centuries of persecution not least of which was the Holocaust. I believed that they had been given a barren, unoccupied land and they had made it fertile and blossom. As the years rolled by, I realised that this land had not been empty and was inhabited by others who also regarded it as their homeland.

So when does history begin? For us as Christians - and for Jewish people too - we go back to the Old Testament narratives. Abraham and Sarah, as nomads, receive the promise of a land for their descendants though they never own it. Famine drives their descendants to Egypt, and later, Moses and Joshua lead a return to the Promised Land. There are periods of exile, such as in Babylon, and returns to the land of Judah.

Reading the Bible texts can make it sound like a God-given birthright to occupy the land and exclude others but it is clear that the people of Israel lived alongside others and that borders were not the permanent lines on a map we see today. 'From Dan to Beersheba' never referred to defensible physical borders but was a general description of the territory inhabited by the twelve tribes.

For many years following King Solomon's reign, the land became a vassal state under various empires, and eventually an outpost of the Roman Empire. Following the destruction of the Temple in 70AD and then the fall of Masada in 73AD, many Jewish people left the land and scattered across the Roman Empire.

The land was renamed Palaestina by the Romans and became a Roman province. Early Christian communities lived in the land and developed during the Byzantine Empire. In the 7th century, Islamic conquests changed the landscape, followed by the Crusades in the 11th-13th centuries, which established temporary Christian kingdoms. In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire expanded into the region, bringing some peace, stability, and coexistence among various religious communities - until its fall after the First World War. Then came the British Mandate and the horrors of the 20th and 21st centuries.

We cannot change the past or wipe all the turmoil from the soil. But a genuine search for a solution that benefits both Palestinians and Israelis must be made. Sadly, neither side seems capable of accommodating the other.

The atrocity of 7th of October provoked a terrible and deadly backlash. The refusal to release hostages is appalling. Yet the actions of the Israeli Government - blocking aid, bombing civilian areas, and enforcing clearance - appear to be the punishment of a civilian population. The hatred unleased on both sides will surely haunt future generations.

The competing claims - from radical Palestinians and radical Israelis - for sole possession of the land from Dan to Beersheba or from Jordan to the sea remain a toxic subtext to the conflict. People speak easily of a 'two-state solution', but shortly before 7th October, I heard a senior aid official say in a private briefing that such a solution was no longer viable.

Since then, there has been continued and deliberate colonisation of the Palestinian West Bank. The territory is now fragmented by a patchwork of Israeli settlements, most of which are illegal under international law. Palestinians continue to be harassed, displaced and stripped of this land they have held for generations.

When two groups - marked by different faiths - clash over the same land, an unholy and toxic mix emerges. There are no easy political solutions.

As Christians, we are called to be people of peace and prayer. We cannot expect instant answers but continue to work and pray for the long term. So do write to your MP expressing your feelings about the conflict. And pray for peace and justice, along with the work at Star Mountain in the West Bank.

The Christian Aid website has many wonderful prayers for the Bible lands, and I will close with one from the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem Hosam E Naoum: '… we pray without ceasing for justice, reconciliation, peace, and an end to hatred and war. We also pray for God to change the hearts of all leaders and decision-makers in our countries and around the world. For we are in dire need of hearts that love, show mercy, and are willing to live in unity with others - hearts that respect human dignity and choose life rather than death.'

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

In memory of Sr Lindsey Newens
(1960-2025)

It was with deep sadness that we learned about the sudden death of our fellow editor, colleague and friend, Sr Lindsey Newens, who was an integral member of the Moravian Messenger Editorial Team.

She offered to join the team right at the beginning when we came together in 2016 and her first contribution was an absolute insistence that the Messenger should be printed in colour rather than black or white. Her inspiration when viewing the magazine as a form of outreach that could go beyond the Church, led to the implementation of other developments not only for the content but also in trialling different methods of distribution to broaden the readership.

Lindsey dealt with the correspondence for the Messenger, including liaising not only with the other people involved with the production of the magazine, but also with congregation representatives and chasing up the editorial team requests for articles. Of course, she also occasionally wrote articles for the Messenger on some of her interests that she was passionate about: animals, wildlife, and the various volunteer work she undertook. She was full of good ideas and had an engaging way of encouraging others to write and in supporting and promoting the work.

The end of another productive Editorial Team meeting. Left to right: Lorraine Parsons, Lindsey Newens, and Sarah Groves.
© Sr Sarah Groves

Our editorial meetings, usually held on Zoom each month, but occasionally in the Wetherspoons in Muswell Hill were times of great friendship and fun. There would be at least 30 minutes of chat about how each of us were getting on and sharing family news before the work proper began. When it did, she was full of ideas and occasional put downs if she was not impressed with an idea for an article. Lindsey was such a creative woman, and that showed in her enthusiasm and love for working on the Messenger and in her friendships. We miss her badly but are so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her.

Editorial Team: ***Srs Sarah Groves and Lorraine Parsons.***

A memorial from Church House will be published in the next issue.

Celebrating a Decade of World Heritage in Christiansfeld

© Eva Kristensen

In July this year, Christianfeld marked the 10th anniversary of its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and we were delighted to return to join the celebrations. In 2015 we had the honour of attending the ceremony heralding Christiansfeld's inscription in the presence of Queen Marguerite of Denmark. This year, delegations from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and Herrnhut, Germany were also present so it was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with friends from all the newly inscribed settlements.

Community celebrations began in the church on the afternoon of Friday 4th July with the traditional Singstunde; the singing of many familiar hymns (in a less familiar language for us) which was joyful and uplifting. This was attended by those from the settlement delegations with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Christiansfeld present, along with the Head of Danish World Heritage and was led by Rev Dr Jørgen Bøytler.

Afterwards we emerged into the beautiful central square where the bronze UNESCO plaque was unveiled by the Mayor. In his address he noted that the plaque states that inscription 'recognises the outstanding universal value of a site which deserves protection for the benefit of all humanity'. He congratulated the Moravian Church and expressed his delight that Bethlehem (USA), Herrnhut (Germany) and Gracehill (UK) have now joined Christiansfeld, saying that 'with four towns World Heritage has grown stronger'.

This was followed by coffee and cake in the square, in front of the Sisters' House; but no ordinary coffee and cake, as the community had provided around sixty different types of traditional homemade Danish cakes and cookies. The only sadness was there were really too many to try them all - but we all did our best! We were fortunate to have the expert knowledge of Steen Lundbye and Louise Klinge to guide us round the settlement later in the afternoon.

The next afternoon was dedicated to a meeting of the UNESCO Transnational Co-ordination Group, with those members not able to be present joining by Zoom. In the evening, we were able to relax with a wonderful meal together at the Brødremenighedens hotel.

Sunday was a chance to attend the service in Church and meet some more of the congregation. In his address Br Jørgen expressed honour and joy at Christiansfeld's inscription. He highlighted the goodwill which still exists in Christiansfeld from the time of its founding to the present day and the confidence that this will continue into the future. Reflecting on the 10 years that have passed since inscription he concluded that it had been 'positive, exciting and at times positively challenging' and was looking forward with anticipation to the years ahead as part of the enlarged world heritage site now known as 'Moravian Church Settlements'.

Sr Sally Ann Johnston
Gracehill

The Real Israel

Letter to the Editor

The modern Jewish state created in the middle east in 1948 was only called Israel through a process of elimination because, according to its founders, 'there wasn't time to come up with anything better', after they themselves had rejected Judea and Zion and several other alternative names. To read the Bible today and assume that its references to Israel apply now to this modern political state is a complete and dangerous mistake.

There is no evidence that the apostles believed that their inheritance was in Palestine, still less that the Jewish people had a divine right to the land in perpetuity, or that Jewish possession of the land would be an important, let alone central, aspect of God's future plan for the world. After the New Testament the land, like an old wineskin, was no longer needed. It had served its purpose as a starting base for God's rescue mission from which the apostles would take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world.

It was like a train journey which had originated there but was moving relentlessly on to its ultimate and far-off destination. There is no branch-line or parallel track going another way for those still looking for a different Messiah. The train has left the station. People of every tribe and nation rejoice to be onboard and long for its final destination.

All the Old Testament quotations regarding the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, so often quoted nowadays by friends of Israel and Christian Zionists, apply only to the escape from Egypt or the return from Babylon and not to the establishment of this Jewish state in 1948. The other biblical promises regarding the kingdom apply to all Christians everywhere regardless of race or background.

The Lord's kingdom is no longer tribal but universal. Christ told the Jews that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a people who would produce its fruits. Christians, wherever they are in the world, are now the true Israel. They are the citizens of the new Jerusalem. They are the real people of God and members of the kingdom in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female. It is they who are Abraham's offspring, and heirs according to the promise. All who are Christ's make up the complete Israel that is to be saved.

Br Richard Ingham
Fairfield

Mission Possible - Summer Camp 2025

© Br James Woolford

This year's summer camp took place from Monday 28th July to the 1st of August at the Boundless Outdoor Centre in Bell Heath Stourbridge. The theme for the week was Mission Possible as we tried to show the young people of our church that through God and with the support and love of each other all things were possible.

There was a total of 12 campers this year and whilst that is a low number compared to last year it was a wonderful experience of togetherness and sharing in fellowship and faith. Because of the smaller size of camp, we were able to offer extra activities which meant that the Tuesday was an action-packed day. It began with climbing and a zip wire through the forest in the morning and then in the afternoon we took on the challenge of a high ropes course. Seeing the campers overcome their fears and listen to them support each other whenever one of them had a wobble (literally and figuratively speaking) was an absolute privilege. I've been a leader of summer camp for a number of years, and it is always something that I admire about our young people who, every year, seem to grow in confidence and love of each other. In the evening, we had a more relaxed time around a campfire where we ate marshmallows and baked dough and sang some classic campfire songs about a boa constrictor, a baby shark and a man called Joe who worked at the butter factory.

Wednesday was back to a more recognisable format as we began with bible studies that were done in their house groups. The campers explored the story of Joseph and looked at 1 Thessalonians 5: 12-28. We decided to name the house groups Dober and Nitschmann to fit with the theme of 'Mission'. I believe it is important to teach the young people of our church about their history so they can use the past to be inspired for the future. We set each group the task to research their namesake and then present information about them on the Thursday which they did expertly and with passion and enthusiasm. In the afternoon we had some more activities as we did bushcraft and rifle shooting where some of us showed a high level of skill and some of us (myself definitely included) couldn't hit a barn door. In the evening, we enjoyed a film night where we watched 'Johnny English' and ate popcorn. The film was a great way to unwind and share in laughter although it's fair to say that nobody laughed quite as often or as loud as Sr Sue Groves. It was great to share in that joy though.

On our final full day together, we had a sporty afternoon of races and games that was interrupted by a huge and much needed water fight where we all got soaked. It had been a long hot day, so this was the perfect way to cool down. After we'd all got dry, we spent some time thinking about the week we'd had and what the campers had liked and not liked so that we can learn for next time. In the evening, I did some magic, and we played an epic outdoor version of their favourite game 'Werewolf' (think 'The Traitors' meets 'Wink Murder' and you'll get the idea).

Our final act together saw us dish out awards to each of the campers for things like, 'the greatest showman', 'best hair' (which went to a camper who dyed his hair red one day) and the 'funniest camper'. We then had a special cup of covenant service reflecting on its origins as a way to send out missionaries like Dober and Nitschmann.

Overall, Summer Camp 2025 was a real blessing to be a part of and we made lasting memories and friendships throughout the week. In next month's 'Moravian Messenger' there will be more personal reflections from leaders and campers but for now I think, with all things considered, we can all look back at this camp and say … 'Mission Achieved'!

Br James Woolford
Summer Camp Leader; Youth and Childrens Committee

Wild Church - A Spirituality of Nature

(continued from front page)

© Sr Lorraine Shorten

Obviously, we still need to do a risk assessment of the area we have chosen to visit and to make sure people stay safe, especially young children. Choose your area carefully and try and choose somewhere that is as accessible as possible, think about unsteady walkers and pushchairs. Give a warning about not eating anything unknown, wash hands after touching things and don't pick wildflowers. And please remember to take all your litter home with you. *'Take only photographs, leave only footprints.'*

At the end of the session, I like to gather people back together in a group and share a drink a biscuit. It is an opportunity for everyone to share their thoughts and experiences, if they want to. We then close with a blessing thanking God for showing us His creation.

I hope your congregation will give Wild Church a go. It isn't complicated, and the benefits of sitting outside will hopefully be beneficial to everyone, physically, mentally and spiritually.

Sr Lorraine Shorten
Minister of Bath Weston and Bath Coronation Avenue congregations; and Provincial Ecumenical Officer.

Resources:
1. Forest Church, Earthed Perspectives on the Gospel. Cate Williams (Grove Books MEv127)
2. Creative Ideas for Wild Church. Mary Jackson and Juno Hollyhock (Canterbury Press)
3. Wild Worship. Discovering God through creation. Rachel Summers (Kevin Mayhew)
4. Wild Lent. Discovering God through creation. Rachel Summers (Kevin Mayhew)
5. Forest Church. A field guide to nature connection for groups and individuals. Bruce Stanley (Mystic Christ Press)

Forever Fulneck: Stories Across the Generations

Since 1753, Fulneck has played a major role in education and in society. For the Moravian Church it has been not only a place of learning but also a home for many generations.

Young people came to Fulneck for schooling not only locally, but from across the world, including children of missionaries and as refugees in war. Numerous former pupils have gone on to serve in their careers in many different places and industries, with some becoming well-known and distinguished in their later life through their work or position. What remained constant was the sense of community and connection. So many have continued to return over the years to support the school as alumni, trustees, and governors.

Three Moravians, with experiences spanning more than 80 years, reflect on what the school has meant to them.

I am much saddened by the closure of my school at Fulneck. I was a pupil there before WW2 from Easter 1939 until the summer of 1952. I was a day boy first and then a boarder with my brother Robin, when our younger brother was born. I was not very sporty, but I do remember enjoying tennis, and I used to play the piano for the hymns in evening prayers sometimes. It was my only school. RAF national service followed. I offered to serve the Moravian Church as a minister leading to studies in Manchester at the University and Fairfield College. I taught at Fulneck in 1958 and 1959 for several weeks before being called for ten years in Jamaica where I managed many schools remembering how I had been taught at Fulneck.

Back in England church service at Wheler Street, Westwood and Salem was followed by a move to Fulneck where I taught at the Girls' School and was a Schools Governor Chairing the Boys. Later, on the Mission Board I had responsibility for school work in India and Nepal.

I have been most grateful to Fulneck School for a good general education, for my wife, Beth (Craig), and many friends. Also, that the School led me into knowing and serving in the ministry of the Moravian Church and much happiness.

Br John McOwat
Bishop of the Unitas Fratrum

I attended Fulneck School from 1975 to 1982. Because we had just moved from the West Indies for my father to serve the Moravian Church in the British Province, I was put back a year as we were unsure how the education system in Barbados compared with the British one. So, I went from being the youngest in my class to being the oldest. This was a wise decision (although I wasn't pleased at the time) as I had struggled academically at Harrison College but began to thrive at Fulneck.

I wasn't the brightest in my class because I was placed in an exceptionally gifted class which stretched me academically. For example, out of a class of 28 boys (it was Fulneck Boys' School when I attended it), 25 got Grade 'A' at Geography 'O' Level and three of us got Grade 'B' (I got a Grade 'B') in 1980 - such was the brilliance of our then geography teacher, Trevor Kernohan, who went on to become Principal of the school. There were other such examples of brilliant teachers - too many to name here.

Fulneck empowered me through its style of education (pedagogy), rather than intimidated me as some of my previous schooling had done. It lit the flame of my interest in pastoral care and in empowering others through counselling, ministry and education. Although I left with poor 'A' Level results (I was too busy being Head Boy in my last year to bother to study as I 'should have'), I got enough grades to gain a place in teacher training college. My ambition, then, was to return and teach at Fulneck (and eventually become the Principal of the School) - none of which I ever achieved - but my journey in education has been amazing and fulfilling, nonetheless. Through my love of education that Fulneck inspired, I have gone on to gain an international reputation as an academic, and to gain three doctorates and two professorships. I have Fulneck to thank for that (along with my own hard work and the mentorship of others). Fulneck also inspired my love of, and loyalty to, the Moravian Church. Through 'Masters' like Harold Jones (Music) and Robin Hutton (History), I was encouraged to develop an interest in the Moravian Church and have gone on to serve it in ordained ministry and in other capacities.

My memories of Fulneck are too many to record here and there were certainly challenges - I don't want to idealise Fulneck, but building resilience through growing and overcoming challenges is also part of education and growing-up. What I do record is my appreciation for the passion that was lit in me for learning and for empowering others. I remain forever grateful to the Moravian Church for enabling me to be educated at Fulneck, and to Fulneck School for all it enabled in me and has given me.

Rev Prof Peter M. Gubi, PhD, ThD, DMin, FRSA, FHEA
Minister of Fairfield Moravian Church
Professor of Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment, University of Chester

I have fond memories of my years at Fulneck between 2011 and 2021. Over those years I saw classroom changes, renovations and friends come and go. Being there from year 4 to 13 meant it was central part of my childhood and helped shape me into the person I am today.

A big contribution to that were my teachers, who made lessons not just educational, but very enjoyable. It wasn't just academic subjects they taught; they also created an environment of encouragement and confidence.

Some memorable times of mine were the weekly Wednesday afternoon Games lessons where we rotated between Football, Rugby, Cricket and Athletics throughout the year. The highlight of the year for me, however, was the school Christingle service which captured the spirit of the season and brought the whole school together. The atmosphere was always very special.

Fulneck was a school, but also a community. While the school may be physically gone, it lives on in the lessons taught, and in the memories and friendships created.

Br Ethan Newman

These stories together help illustrate a long tradition of inspiration and lifelong connections. The school may now have closed its doors, but its impact remains clear in the lives it has shaped and in the service its pupils continue to offer locally and in many parts of the world.

Sharing our Church

- do young people really have a place within our Church?

In this article I am going to challenge you to consider whether we are really a 'Church for all'. It is not meant to offend, however, I believe, that if we want a sustainable future for our church, we need to start a conversation in our congregations about whether we are providing enough space for the younger generations to connect with God in and through our churches and our church cultures.

Through the NCD survey we now have confirmed that the vast majority of our membership is in the over 65-year-old age group. So, if you are reading this, there is a good chance you are of the post war generation, otherwise known as the Baby Boomers. Your generation has been characterised by being rewarded for working hard and sticking to the rules. You have seen the benefits of a growing economy in the 1980s and 1990s, grown up during the Cold War, and ultimately seeing the victory of the West over the Soviet Union in 1989 and the optimism of the 1990s. This is in stark contrast to what younger generations have experienced, which involves a world experience of a decline in western democracy since the millennium, characterised by regular wars, financial instability - both globally and on an individual level, rapid technological change which is not necessarily for the good, and a constant pressure to compete and be successful in a culture where the system is stacked against them.

You may not be aware, but there is currently a quiet but significant revival in young people starting to go to church in our country, often with no previous church background at all. This exciting revelation was highlighted in a recent Bible Society report, *A Quiet Revival*, which has shown that under 35s, as a proportion of church attendance, has gone up from 4% to 16% between 2018 and 2025. What is more, the study also shows that the under 35 age group are the group that is most likely to read their Bibles regularly. It is also in part driven by the experience of the world which young people have that I outlined above. This means that there is currently a wave of young people who are seeking an authentic relationship with God and want to be a full member of a church which can provide that.

This next statement will be controversial, and it is not intended as a slight or to exclude or discount any of our faithful and long contributing members. However, given the evidence, I wonder if our church is too orientated towards catering for the needs of the over 65s age group.

The fact that our congregation members' age range is squeezed toward the upper ages suggests that we are.

There are currently many seemingly unrelated debates going on in our congregations now, which indirectly have an effect on this issue. Decisions on upkeep of our church buildings, including redecoration, installation of TV screens, or the removal of pews for chairs, are being stalled in the name of tradition or finances. I have always thought that the strength of our church is in rooting radical change in our traditional Moravian values.

The resistance to different styles of worship too is a deeply concerning trend. I have witnessed in at least three Moravian Churches times when, because the worship is different to the standard format, that members have either actively criticised the format in the middle of the service or have even walked out and not participated at all in worship. This is not only not within the spirit of being a 'church for all' but is also sends a very clear message to young people that the style of worship that connects them to God has no place in our Church.

Lastly, and most disturbingly, having talked to many of the young adults across our Church, many are deeply unsure about their place in the future of our Church and are actively thinking about going elsewhere. Anecdotally, reasons given are that they feel that the worship does not allow them to connect to God, that the Church structures are painfully slow and antiquated, that young adults do not feel supported to develop their faith and access to leadership positions appear inaccessible or undesirable.

These are just a few of the things that I think we really need to do some soul searching on as a church - however, I do not want to leave you in despair over the lack of young people in our Church. We must simply recognise it for what it is. What is more important is what action we take to change the situation. A growing number of young adults want to come to church. They want to come and be connected to God in an authentic way. In a chaotic world they can find guidance, wisdom and faith from their elders in our Churches, but only if they feel welcomed, brought into our family of believers, and have an experience of faith which is relevant and speaks to the young adults of the 2020s, not the 1960s.

I believe the way forward is to find a balance between recognising the fact that most of our current members are in their 70s or 80s, alongside the need to provide worship, teaching, and outreach projects which speak to other age groups. Perhaps some simple first steps would be to actively listen and accept what the few young people are saying in our congregations; not oppose some of those small changes to buildings which update our Churches without changing their essence or our Moravian essentials; and to put our own needs to one side and try to see the benefits in other forms of worship and connecting to God for the benefit of a new generation being added to our churches. A sustainable Moravian future in the British Province depends on issues such as this.

Br Stephen Maxwell
Chair, Project 32 Implementation Board

'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Br Philip Cooper

Br Philip is the minister of Gomersal and Wellhouse Moravian Churches, in West Yorkshire, has served on the Provincial Board and is one of our Ecumenical Officer.

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

I was born and grew up in Greater Manchester. My father died when I was 9 years old and my mother died when I was 19 years old. I have one younger sister. I am married to Janet and have three children - Ben, Hannah and Joshua. On leaving school, aged 16, I worked in administration at Manchester Social Services.

How and when did you come to faith?

I cannot say when I came to faith. Since I was young, I have had a faith in God. I was baptised as an infant, at St Andrew's Anglican Church, in Droylsden. When I was five or six years old, I started to attend the Sunday School at Fairfield Moravian Church, and was confirmed and became an adult member of the Fairfield congregation when I was 16 years old.

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

After I was confirmed, I became a member of the Youth Fellowship at Fairfield. The minister, Br John Smith, asked the Youth Fellowship to lead a Sunday service. I was given the job of preparing and preaching the sermon. This led me to lay preaching and experiencing God's call to ordained ministry. An important aspect of discerning this call was that different people, over a long period of time, asked me if I had considered ordained ministry; including school classmates, my manager at Manchester Social Services, as well as people at church. It included people of faith and no faith. Sometimes people recognise things in you, that you do not fully recognise yourself.

Where and how did you train?

I trained for ordained ministry at Northern College, in Manchester. I then had the wonderful opportunity to spend a year studying at the Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA. Janet came with me. I then spent a year as a student minister at the Coronation Avenue and Weston Moravian Churches, in Bath, working alongside Br Paul Gubi, as my Supervisor.

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

I would not like to single out one thing as my greatest joy. I enjoy helping congregations and individuals grow in their faith, through worship, prayer, sermons and Bible study. I enjoy helping people discover their gifts and abilities, and helping them find the space in church and beyond to use those gifts and abilities. I am not sure there is anything I struggle with, but there are aspects of ministry I am less gifted in and some aspects of the job that I do not enjoy. Of course, this is true of most jobs.

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

When I am frustrated or annoyed about something, I verbally express those feelings to God. Taking my lead from the Psalms, in the Bible, I see this as prayer. God wants us to be honest with him.

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

No, I am not afraid to die. I believe in a resurrection. Based on the message and ministry of Jesus, and the Bible more generally, I believe that life beyond death will be a life where we are deeply and completely healed. It will be a life of peace, joy and wholeness. We will see the life we live now from a completely new perspective. I, also, see the life we live now as a preparation for the life to come.

Why are so many people turning their backs on the Church? What has your ecumenical experience taught you about this?

I have no perfect answers. Here are just a few thoughts. Many churches have not adapted to the fact that we now live in a post-Christendom and post-modern society. Many churches need to rediscover their enthusiasm for the Gospel. We need to constantly try to discern what part God is asking us to play in God's mission. Part of this discernment process, is allowing the communities in which our churches are set to help set the church's agenda. Regarding my ecumenical experience, churches can accomplish so much more if they share resources and work together. Churches have so much to learn from and offer to one another. Also, we have been entrusted with a Gospel of reconciliation and peace. The church's witness is undermined when people see a divided church.

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

My favourite band is U2. The band's music is great. Their live performances are amongst the best I have experienced. Their lyrics contain some profound poetry and often the deepest theology I have ever encountered in the lyrics of a song. My favourite film is 'It's a Wonderful Life', starring James Stewart and Donna Reed, which is a moving affirmation of the value of every person's life. My favourite book is Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', which is still relevant to the political situation of today, and contains some important warnings.

The place where you feel closest to God?

I feel closest to God in church, meeting with God's people. However, God is present in every moment of life, and I can feel God's presence in all sorts of places.

What inscription on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

During my life, I want to love God, my family, my friends and people God calls me to love.

Heritage Days

Open House London at Fetter Lane, Chelsea

Since 2017, Fetter Lane Moravian Church has been taking part in Open House London, and this year it will be held on Saturday and Sunday, 13th and 14th September from 1pm to 5pm.

We expect to welcome around 200 visitors over the weekend; including people interested in the long history of the Close since the days of Sir Thomas More until us today: the Moravians. As always, members of the congregation will be on hand, able to expand on the information given in our informative booklet and to talk about the spiritual focus of the Close today.

A quiz is available for the children as well free refreshments. You can find us at: 381 Kings Road, London, SW10 0LP. All are welcome in this place!

© Angie Paddock

Bath (Weston)

Here at Weston, we have had a very busy year so far: bookings for the hall and church are doing very well, and there are not many slots left available. We had a Spring Bank Holiday Car Boot and Tabletop sale plus a BBQ; there was a steady flow of people for most of the three hours and it's a less stressful way of raising money for church funds, thanks to Br Chris Shorten. A ground clearing Saturday morning was arranged to remove the brambles that are taking over at the back of the church plus weeds in the car park area.

Rev Lorraine is now a Bingo caller once a month on a Wednesday afternoon, with a three-month trial period to see how popular it is, but the first one held in July went well. Rev Lorraine's Lego group which is held in the school holidays starts in August, and she also adds a craft table for little hands to do their skills. Continuing with her other groups, an eight-week course to Discover the Bible, from introducing the Bible to Revelation, The Story Complete, has already started. Also, the monthly craft group is growing in numbers. On Saturday 26th July, we held our summer fair. The weather was ok, but the stalls were all inside, as showers were supposed to be on their way. Refreshments went well as always; the tombola was popular along with the plant stall. It was a good four hour's hard work, and the volunteers did the church proud.

The next new item Rev Lorraine has introduced is Wild Church - explore God and creation in the wild. This was taken up on Sunday 27th July at 3pm and the Bath Coronation Avenue congregation joined us as well. It was held not far from the church in an orchard, so if you were able, you could walk or if not, the Boys Brigade bus was available for a lift. A spot was found to set up chairs and picnic blankets, and when everyone was settled, we closed our eyes and said what we could hear. Then we were let free for 30 mins to roam about and hug a tree or find something that takes your eye or just walk and look at God's creations and thank him. A few were lucky enough to spot a Kingfisher down by the stream. We went back to our seating area, where a discussion took place about what we saw etc, then coffee, hot chocolate, tea and a selection of nibbles was passed around to indulge in to end our Wild Church. Can't wait for the next one - I really enjoyed it and hopefully everyone else did too. August is now upon us and it's a quiet month for the church, so we can rest and re-charge our batteries for the busy months ahead.

Sr Carole Young

© Br Michael Newman

Fetter Lane, London

From Fetter Lane it's a short-ish walk over the Thames at Albert Bridge to the famous Battersea Park: a 200-acre open space with playgrounds, a boating lake, a children's zoo, playing fields and more. On a recent Saturday in August, a group of us Moravians joined the crowds for a sponsored walk in aid of this year's Moravian Women's Association charities. We asked (or strong-armed) friends and family to sponsor us as we walked around the park, each lap clocking up $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Unbelievably, one from our group did four laps and finished around the same time as those of us who were satisfied with two!

Walking around the perimeter of the Park gave us a variety of views including the well-known Peace Pagoda, built in 1985 and looked after by a Buddhist monk. Its aim is to focus our minds on world peace, especially meaningful in today's world, and as we commemorate 80 years since the bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It has been a while since our small congregation has taken on such a group challenge but planning and walking together was an enjoyable activity and the type of event we hope to continue as we work on our Natural Church Development action plan. Being able to donate to the worthy MWA charities was a privilege.

Sr Cynthia Dize

Hornsey, London

Sun, sea and celebration has been a big part of our church over the last couple of months. The sun made an appearance for us in June when we held our annual Garden Fete. We had a good turnout of church members and locals alike, enjoying the delightful variety of food including the BBQ and very tasty cake stall. We also had the plant stall which sold out very quickly, as usual and the Bric-a-Brac is another popular stall with something for everyone. The 'Wine or Water' game returned by popular request after a year off, and the magnetic fishing game was great for the children. Hornsey is lucky enough to have the junior steel band to provide us with live music.

© Br Michael Newman

© Sr Michelle King

A big thank you to everyone involved in the cooking, the preparation, the running of the stalls, and the tidying up afterwards. It was another very successful day, filled with love, laughter and togetherness, whilst raising money for our church funds.

At the end of July there was a church outing to the seaside, Whitstable to be exact. We weren't quite so lucky with the weather, but this didn't dampen spirits, and everyone had a wonderful day. As the song goes, 'Oh I do like to be beside the seaside …' Once there, everyone was able to go and do their own thing. Whitstable is a small, quirky seaside town with something for everyone. There were boat trips on offer and of course, the opportunity to dip our toes in the sea. Many of us enjoyed fish and chips, and some were daring enough to try the local oysters. It was a lovely day, enjoyed by a coach full of members and friends. Thank you to Sr Patricia and Br Michael for organising the trip. No doubt this will once again become an annual event.

The month of May saw the celebration for Br Michael and Sr Claire of their Silver Wedding Anniversary. At the end of the service, the congregation very kindly presented them with card signed by everyone along with some beautiful gifts, and Sr Patricia said a prayer for them. This was followed by celebratory refreshments. Michael and Claire would like to thank everyone for the generous gifts.

We have also given thanks and our appreciation to Br Tony Calder who has retired from being our church caretaker, a role he has done steadfastly for many years. During one of our morning services, Br Tony was given a gift from the congregation to thank him for his years of hard work, care and dedication. Thank you again, Br Tony from everyone at Hornsey.

Sr Claire Newman

Ockbrook, Derbyshire

On 26th July 2025, on a lovely Saturday afternoon, our Ockbrook Church and wider community celebrated 275 years of Moravian brethren's longstanding presence in the community.

The event was well attended - the joyful gathering of neighbours and friends, showcasing the best of our Community Spirit. Our stalls offered a wide variety of goods to purchase, including a plant stall, white elephant, books, handmade jewellery, ice cream, raffle and, of course, our ever-popular cake and refreshment stalls. The coconut shy and 'splat the rat' games ensured a great deal of hilarity amongst both young and old.

We also offered conducted tours in and around our Church with a fantastic display detailing our history which was well received.

We are often asked 'Who are you Moravians?' so a Moravian stall was prepared by our NCD (Natural Church Development) team with free branded merchandise along with a small card detailing a very short précis of our ancestry and faith. These enabled us to start conversations about who we are, our beliefs and worship.

We had more leaflets available with more detailed information. A large poster was created and our congregation each gave a short synopsis about why being a Christian in our Moravian Church was important to them along with individual photographs. The comments were sincere, heartfelt and garnered a lot of interest.

© Sr Jane Brewster

© Sr Jane Brewster

One of our members made some lovely homemade peg dolls dressed in traditional Moravian costume according to their marital status. A further poster developed by one of our congregations detailed why faith and worship was becoming increasingly important and why many more people are connecting to church and the need for faith in our time.

In addition, we raised much needed funds for repairs to our Manse house. It was teamwork, and we managed splendidly. Well done everybody!

Srs Jackie Flint, Rose Turner, and Adriana Davey

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Death

The Provincial Board and Church House Staff were deeply saddened to learn of the sudden death of Sr Lindsey Newens, our faithful Provincial Administrator. Lindsey served the British Province for 25 years and carried a breadth of responsibility in her management of our office. Lindsey's work extended well beyond internal office administration. She supported our Provincial activities, was a member of the Moravian Messenger Editorial Team and provided a vital link for the Moravian diaspora across the UK and Ireland.

We give thanks for Lindsey's life and service, and we hold her family, friends and all who loved her in her prayers.

Secondment

Following the sudden death of Sr Lindsey Newens, we have been deeply appreciative of the support, understanding and care shown across the Province, especially to the staff at Church House. We continue to remember with gratitude the work and service Lindsey provided as the Church House Administrator.

As we continue to navigate this time of change, we have asked Sr Jane Carter to devote increased time to Provincial matters over the next couple of months until a more permanent arrangement is made.

In addition to Sr Carter's dedicated call to serve the Swindon and Tytherton congregations, we are grateful for her work and leadership on the Provincial Board. This secondment will require approximately two days per week at Church House, which will inevitably impact her availability at Swindon and Tytherton.

We remain grateful for your understanding, and we will keep you updated as further plans develop.

Our Moravian Treasures Group Studies

Over the last few months, I have been working on producing a study series based on the chapters in 'Our Moravian Treasures'. The chapters cover the following topics: Getting to know the unity; The ties that bind us together; The Moravian approach to theology; Understanding the church; The Moravian understanding of ministry; Worship in the Moravian tradition; Mission and social ministry; A vision for the Moravian Church.

The studies are designed to deepen faith, encourage discussion, and strengthen fellowship. Each session includes an opening prayer, icebreaker question, scripture reading, chapter summary, discussion questions, hymn suggestion, closing prayer. No prior reading is required. An optional homework activity is available, and participants can share their work or reflections at the start of the next session if they choose to do so. The final session includes a group activity to complete during the session.

The studies were trialled with the Hornsey and Fetter Lane Bible study group, as well as at the Ministers' and Lay Workers' In-Service Training in June, and are now available for use in the Province. I hope that they will be a useful resource for congregations wanting to explore what it means to be a member of the Moravian Church today.

Br Michael Newman

Celebrating 30 years of Sr Gladys Korsah!

On Friday 1st August 2025, we celebrated Sr Glady's Korsah who has served as our Office Clerk for 30 years! The Provincial Board are grateful for her constant presence and support for Church House and the Book Room! Her commitment is a gift to us all.

Provincial Diary for September

13	Mission & Society Committee	Bath Weston
15-16	Provincial Board Meeting	Church House
22-24	European Continental and British Provincial Boards Retreat	Drumalis
25	LAMM (London Association of Moravian Missions) AGM	Online

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Deaths

21st May 2025	Shirley Lovell	Hornsey
16th July 2025	Lindsey Newens	Church House
12th August 2025	Elma Lutton	Gracehill

DATES TO REMEMBER

4	Prophet's Birthday - Muslim
12-21	Heritage Open Days ***(www.heritageopendays.org.uk/)***
14	Education Sunday ***(https://cte.org.uk/education-sunday/)***
20-26	World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel ***(www.worldweekforpeace.org)***
21	UN International Day of Peace ***(www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/)***
22	Autumn Equinox
22 Sept-5 Oct	Fairtrade Fortnight ***(www.fairtrade.org.uk)***

Gracehill Robin

© Sr Sarah Groves

Many of you know what a great animal lover Sr Lindsey Newens was. She and Lorraine came over and stayed with me in February this year and I related a story to her about a robin that used to be fed from my hand, and she urged me to write it up for the 'Moravian Messenger'. So here it is in tribute to Lindsey.

Like many gardeners Chris and I had a soft spot for robins and there was always one in our garden/allotment that seemed to hang around as I dug over the rich soil. But no more was said or came of that. Like many others during COVID, we took even more delight in the birds and feeding them in our back yard was such a pleasure.

Sadly, Chris died in April 2023, and the family and I were determined to make it a celebration of his life, talents and faith. Coming down Brothers Walk from God's Acre after his burial a robin followed, hopping on the wall all the way down, looking at us and almost encouraging us as we led everyone to the hall for refreshments. The following day a robin came into the manse through the open back door. It perched calmly in the kitchen and eventually left by the same door it had come in by. Of course, this robin became known as Granny's robin although whether it was the same robin that had accompanied us from God's Acre I never knew.

The robin became tame enough to feed out of my hand and this gave such pleasure, and, in a strange way, comfort. There is an old country saying that a loved one is never far away when a robin is around. But tragedy was to strike. In 2024 I had seen a mouse and set up a trap laced with peanut butter in the greenhouse, hidden I thought, in an awkward place. One morning I found the trap and my robin trapped by one leg. The leg was obviously broken, and I was distraught that my trap could have caused such an injury. I was never that worried about the mice I caught!

But the robin lived and continued to fly into the back yard to be fed by hand. Bless him, he wobbled a fair bit, but he kept going and was always rewarded with extra food. Eventually the broken leg fell off and he perched more securely. I did not know if it was a he or a she but our friendship flourished. He lived in the honeysuckle bush in the front garden and would wait for me to come home and then come flying towards the feed buckets for me to hand feed him, and then if he was lucky, I would leave the lid off the bucket so he could feed himself.

I recounted this tale to Lorraine and Lindsey during their stay, and she was delighted to see the said robin perching, with his one leg on the wall of my front garden!

Sadly, from my point of view the story did not have a happy ending. Robins are very territorial and will fight to keep others out of the way, they are not good at sharing! Later this spring another robin came in and very viciously chased my robin away. I did not know how he would fare if he had to rely on himself. A few weeks later one of my gardening friends in Church came up to me to ask if I had lost my one-legged robin as he had turned up in their garden and they had been feeding him. I was so relieved and told them all about the new robin chasing my robin off. I have asked not to be told if my robin stops going to their garden as I want the story to end with him settled in a new safe home.

I want to keep believing in the miracles that can happen when humans and nature live together in harmony! Doesn't God know when even a sparrow falls from the sky!

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. Matthew 10:29.

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

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