



MORAVIAN MESSENGER

Reflections on a Christmas Baby



Christmas is a magical time for us as a family not only because we get to spend it together but because we get to celebrate two very special birthdays.

I was due to give birth to our first child the week before Christmas 2018, and I was determined to have my baby before Christmas because I wanted to be at home for Christmas Day. However, things were not working out to plan! I remember being very nervous about going into hospital, the prospect of giving birth and I was worrying about missing so much of the Christmas celebrations. Christmas with my family is so important to me and now, looking back I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt about leaving everything they knew, their family and friends and having to be away from them at such a worrying time.

I was several days overdue, feeling uncomfortable and my anxiety was building with every hour. I ended up going into hospital the day before Christmas Eve and I was kept in overnight. The morning of Christmas Eve I was told I had to wait for a bed to be induced. Eventually I was taken to the birthing suit, where I had a fabulous midwife who chatted to me, got to know my husband and I, kept us calm and put our minds at rest. At 8pm her shift was finished, and she was having to go home to get her cooker fixed on Christmas Eve. I begged her to stay with me because she was so calm and so encouraging. She stayed and at 8:10 Joshua was born 9lb 3oz. I was so relieved that he had arrived safely and that I had such great care from the midwives and staff at the hospital. Joshua was given a special Christmas Santa hat for his newborns hat. I wonder how Mary felt giving birth all alone in the stable with no one to help her but Joseph. Did she feel anxious about becoming a mother and how this change would impact her, Joseph and their new family.

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Editorial

I am learning to receive and be thankful. I am thankful for small kindnesses in the great scheme of things when other things seem overwhelming. It is saying you, the recipient matter, and it matters that I can do things for you whoever you are and wherever you are. So, I have been mulling over the radical nature of kindness and the counter cultural actions of those who give it.

Kindness is saying I will put you first even for a small time and I will not pursue my own agenda again even if only for a small time. Kindness is a form of hope, it is lighting a candle in the darkness and raging against the darkness around us.

Then today I came across a photocopy of a hand typed faith declaration in my liturgy papers. I'm not certain who wrote it and online search engines seem to indicate that it is the 'The Easter Declaration' (or sometimes 'An Easter Affirmation'), and it was written in 1982 by members of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference and the South African Council of Churches, led by Rev Allan Boesak, during the apartheid era. If you know who wrote it, please let me know and I will gratefully acknowledge and retrospectively ask for permission to print.

Although it appears to be an Easter Affirmation the words seem so appropriate words for times of personal darkness, for our world turning into the winter darkness and with so many problems facing it. Hope needs to rage against hopelessness and kindness is one way of doing just that.

At Christmas we learn of a God who intervenes in our world, not with an army but with a helpless baby, who grows up to become a helpless victim against the might of an imperial army and a religious structure. It is about ordinary people who refuse to give up and take on Jesus as the hope and life of the world.

I hope you enjoy these words and that they give you as much hope as they have given me and that they encourage you to carry out as many acts of kindness as you can this Advent and Christmas.

Sr Sarah Groves



We declare that Jesus Christ is the Life of the World. It is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and be lost -

This is true: For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction -

This is true: I have come that they might have life, and that abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay forever -

This is true: For unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given, and that the government shall be upon his shoulder, and that his name shall be called wonderful counsellor, mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world -

This is true: To me is given all authority in heaven and on earth and lo and I am with you, even unto the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church, before we do anything -

This is true: I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall have dreams.

It is not true that our dreams for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history -

This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth and so we declare with humanity, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ - the Life of the World.

Author unknown

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

While some of you may choose to hold your Church Service Sunday on the 23rd, please be aware that the prepared material uses the lectionary readings for the 16th. Regardless of when you observe Church Service Sunday, I hope it was a meaningful and successful event for all.

Thank you.

Br Michael Newman
Provincial Board

Correction

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We have noticed a discrepancy regarding the date of Church Service Sunday between the material distributed and the front-page article in last month's Messenger. To clarify, Church Service Sunday is scheduled for the third Sunday in November, which falls on the 16th this year. The confusion stems from the fact that the third Sunday in November is typically the Sunday before Advent. However, this year, November has five Sundays, which makes the Sunday before Advent the fourth Sunday, falling on the 23rd.



© Sr Katie Groves-Bond

Raising Faith Monthly from the Youth and Children's Committee (YCC)

Our article this month is an interview with Br Kieran Shakespeare about his experience doing the Worship Leader course. 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.

From Pew to Pulpit

- Sr Katie Groves-Bond interviews Br Kieran Shakespeare

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your relationship to the church?

Hi there! My name's Kieran, I've been with the Moravian Church for almost seven years now, and I was introduced to the Church by my then friend - and now lovely wife - Leigha when I was visiting her in Bath and have been a part of the Coronation Avenue congregation ever since.

What inspired you to take the Worship Leader course?

A combination of things but chiefly among them was Lorraine informing me that I was signed up! Lorraine is very good at 'directly motivating' people, a quality I respect.

But also Paul Holdsworth, when he was with us, was always telling me he thought I'd be good at this kind of thing. His support was always a valuable thing I have held with me throughout the years.

Patsy Holdsworth has always been equally as supportive. So between God and three ministers I can't really argue with how much motivation I had to do this - hopefully I'm doing them all proud.

Can you tell us a little bit of what the course was like and what was involved?

The course was actually lots of fun. Basically, once a month we would commit a Friday evening and an entire day Saturday (with mandated brew and food breaks of course!) to learning a specific aspect of worship leading from a minister, or sometimes two! What was presented as a strict syllabus was hopefully, they won't mind me saying, felt more like a relaxed build up of a knowledge, confidence and a support network of both ministers and fellow people on the course, that left me feeling able to lead worship effectively. After eight (I think?) months of this we met up for a retreat where we each put together a practice

service and delivered it to the group and Lorraine who gave us feedback and ultimately decided whether or not we were qualified worship leaders.

What do you feel you have learned about yourself during your training and what effect has it had on your faith?

My training has given me a lot of confidence I didn't have before. It taught me that actually sharing my faith with people isn't at scary as you would think, and that ultimately we all have something we can teach each other when it comes to outlooks on faith and how we practice it.

Being forced to more directly confront faith and worship really helped to strengthen my faith in God and also be more resolute in what I believe and my desire to share that with people.

How do you see the role of a worship leader supporting the minister and congregation?

All of our ministers work incredibly hard and it's nice to be able to support them more directly, I think it lets them not feel so bad about needing to take some time to recharge or allows them to travel for more province wide things since they know they have someone who can take a service in their absence.

We're quite fortunate in our congregation in that we have many people willing to take a service.

We value fellowship and community. How do you plan to nurture relationships within the congregation?

I'd say I'm quite lucky in that my congregation is fairly close-knit anyway, but I have felt that having the opportunity to travel to nearby congregations such as Weston and Swindon and take services there has really allowed me to feel closer to those congregations and I generally enjoy my

time there.

Moravians emphasise mission and witness through action. How do you feel being a worship leader will help to serve both inside and beyond the church community?

Inside the church community I am hopefully another outlet through which people can come and practice and feel good about their faith. Doing the course has given me a lot more confidence to speak about and share my faith, in a way that comes across a lot better.

What aspects of the coursework felt most challenging, and how did you meet those challenges?

To be honest I found the workload quite light which is nice. Short of taking notes and getting involved in the sessions the only big piece of work was preparing the mock service for the residential assessment at the end which was challenging but everyone was supportive and offered great advice.

How do you envision your role in strengthening the future of Moravian congregational life?

We'll see where we go from here, always happy to chip in where needed and who knows how far the path of worship leading will take me?

What would you say to anyone considering taking the worship leader course?

It's well worth the time if you even have an inkling of wanting to nurture a safe environment for people practicing their faith. You will learn a lot about the why's of what we do and it's really interesting. Being a worship leader is very rewarding.

And finally, is there anything else you would like to say about it and your experiences?

It was a wonderful time and really strengthened my faith. Reach out if you have any questions.



After an hour or so one of the midwifery sisters on duty came by and I realised it was one of our own church members, Sr Lorna, and she asked how we were getting on. I told her I would love to see my parents as it had been such a long ordeal, and I just wanted them around me. Then Lorna told me to let them come up for a quick visit even though it was way past visiting. So my parents and my husband's parents got to meet Joshua that evening and the sense of love and happiness and excitement for this new baby for us as a new family was amazing. I wonder did Mary and Joseph feel such relief when the shepherds came to marvel at the baby Jesus. Did they feel safe and secure knowing that others had come to support them and be with them?

When all our family had gone home. My husband was allowed to go with me to the maternity ward, but he wasn't allowed to stay the night. I was left on a full ward with other new mums and baby's all trying to sleep. I felt so lonely. However soon it was Christmas morning. The nurses had put together a small choir and were going around each of the wards singing Christmas carols to the mothers and new babies and there was even a visit from Father Christmas. This sense of excitement and joy on the ward was felt by everyone. I wonder did the angels sing in heaven celebrating the Saviour's birth? Did they share in the joy of welcoming the new king?

When the families were allowed to come on to the ward it was filled with laughter love and celebrations. My husband and I were basking in this new life we had created and soon it was time for Christmas dinner. The hospital put on a feast for Christmas dinner and gave everyone Christmas crackers. We were told that we would be allowed to go home as soon as possible and quickly we were ready to go home as a family of

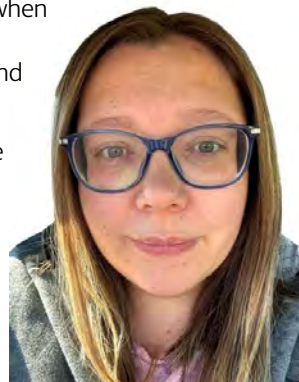
three. We drove on empty streets and managed to get home and settled in time to watch the Queen's speech, a big tradition in our house.

Later on that evening, we had a visit from my parents who had cooked us a lovely Christmas dinner and brought it down in plastic Tupperware boxes for us all to share. We heated the dinner up and ate it together with Joshua, the best Christmas present we could have asked for. I wonder how Mary felt having to stay in a new town for the census not really having family or friends to help and support her and Joseph and the baby Jesus. Did she feel worried and anxious for the future?

As I have reflected on our family story, I have seen the human side of the Christmas story; the difficulties Mary and Joseph faced as new parents and how much they depended on each other. The Queen's words in her Christmas message still resonates with me: 'The Christmas story retains its appeal since it doesn't provide theoretical explanations for the puzzles of life. Instead, it's about the birth of a child and the hope that birth, 2000 years ago, brought to the world. Only a few people acknowledged Jesus when he was born. Now billions follow him. I believe his message of peace-on-earth and good will to all is never out of date.'

I hope we can all show respect and love for each other this Christmas and seek peace on earth because of the birth of Jesus and for the sake of every child born.

Sr Debbie Armstrong
Gracehill



Letter to Editorial Team

Re: The Moravian Legacy in the Caribbean Project

The Archive and Heritage Committee welcomes discussion of Br Livingstone Thompson's article and the subsequent letter from Br Richard Ingham. Our committee is not running the research project on the Moravian Church and slavery, which is led by researchers at the University of the West Indies. Br Thompson, who is on our committee, is part of the wider reference group supporting the project.

The project is intended to gather evidence and understand the Church's history in the Caribbean from 1732. Researchers are looking at how the Church's beliefs, finances, and activities were connected to slavery and colonialism. Using letters, journals, and church records, the aim is to present the history as fully and accurately as possible. It is not about blaming anyone today.

Learning from history is important. The past shapes communities, institutions, and Church life, and studying it can guide how we act today. It is also worth noting that ministers regularly preach from the Bible, drawing lessons from events, decisions, and experiences of past generations to guide faith and conduct today. This shows how understanding the past can help us live faithfully in the present.

Just as we remember those who served in war and celebrate Moravian World Heritage sites, we can study the more challenging parts of our story thoughtfully and respectfully. We recognise that looking at history can raise questions or make people uncomfortable, and we encourage open, thoughtful discussion. Honest research strengthens our understanding, supports faithfulness in the present, and helps the Church engage constructively with the lessons of the past.

Br Christopher Shorten

Chair, Moravian Church Provincial Archive and Heritage Committee

The Provincial Board of the British Province of the Moravian Church is encouraging all congregations to engage with the term stewardship. Stewardship focuses our attention on time, talent, and financial resources. Stewardship is rooted in biblical principles and seeks to cultivate a culture of generosity, service, and gratitude within the Moravian Church community.

Stewardship also goes hand in hand with our focus at Holy Habits, that we have focussed attention at in previous years. We aim to inspire our congregations to recognise and use their

God-given gifts and skills for the growth of the church and community.

Three Bible Studies are available for those congregation that wish to start reflecting on this topic. Please contact Br Edwin Quildan for information.

The quiz below aims to introduce you to the term Stewardship and some biblical references, and the answers will be published in next month's issue of the Moravian Messenger.

Bible Study Notes - Stewardship Biblical Quiz 1

1. What does the Bible say about the earth and its resources in Genesis 1:28?

- A) It's meant to be exploited.
- B) Humans are to subdue it and have dominion over it.
- C) It is to be ignored.
- D) Humans are not allowed to use it.

2. According to 1 Peter 4:10, what are we to do with the gifts we have received from God?

- A) Keep them to ourselves.
- B) Use them to serve others as good stewards of God's grace.
- C) Only use them for personal gain.
- D) Sell them for profit.

3. In Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Talents, what did the master commend the servants for?

- A) Hoarding the talents.
- B) Investing and multiplying what was given to them.
- C) Burying the talents.
- D) Complaining about the amount they were given.

4. According to Luke 16:10, what does Jesus say about faithfulness in little things?

- A) It doesn't matter.
- B) Whoever is faithful in little things will also be faithful in much.
- C) Faithfulness in little things is unimportant.
- D) It's better to focus on big things only.

5. What does the Bible say about the love of money in 1 Timothy 6:10?

- A) It is the root of all evil.
- B) It is a necessary tool for life.
- C) It is a blessing from God.
- D) It should be pursued at all costs.

6. According to Proverbs 3:9, how should we honour the Lord with our wealth?

- A) By accumulating wealth as much as possible.
- B) By giving the first fruits of all our crops.
- C) By sharing wealth only with close family members.
- D) By storing wealth in treasure chests.

7. What principle about stewardship is emphasised in 2 Corinthians 9:7?

- A) God loves a cheerful giver.
- B) Giving should be done in secret.
- C) Giving should be done begrudgingly.
- D) Giving is unnecessary for Christians.

8. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus warns against storing up treasures where?

- A) In heaven.
- B) In the hearts of people.
- C) On earth, where moths and rust destroy.
- D) In the kingdom of God.

9. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37, what did the Samaritan steward?

- A) Time, money, and compassion.
- B) His cattle.
- C) His wealth.
- D) His reputation.

10. What does Colossians 3:23 say about work and stewardship?

- A) Work should be done lazily.
- B) Work should be done with a selfish attitude.
- C) Work should be done as though serving the Lord, not people.
- D) Work is unimportant.

11. According to Psalm 24:1, who owns the earth and everything in it?

- A) The nations.
- B) The individual person.
- C) God.
- D) The government.

12. How does Jesus describe a faithful servant in Luke 12:42-44?

- A) One who is rich and well-off.
- B) One who knows how to hoard resources.
- C) One who is faithful and wise in managing the household.
- D) One who avoids responsibility.

13. According to Proverbs 21:20, what is the wise person's approach to wealth?

- A) They spend all their wealth on luxuries.
- B) They store up treasures, avoiding sharing with others.
- C) They save and store valuable resources.
- D) They spend recklessly.

14. In 2 Corinthians 8:12, Paul speaks about giving according to one's ability. What principle does this reflect?

- A) Give only when you have more than enough.
- B) Stewardship is proportional to one's resources.
- C) Giving is only for the wealthy.
- D) Giving is only for the poor.

15. What does the Bible teach in James 1:17 about all good gifts?

- A) They come from human effort.
- B) They come from God, the Father of lights.
- C) They are a result of luck.
- D) They are to be hoarded for personal gain.

16. What does Jesus say in Matthew 25:31-46 about stewardship in relation to helping others?

- A) Helping others is optional for Christians.
- B) Those who serve the poor, hungry, and needy are serving Jesus.
- C) Serving others is less important than personal wealth.
- D) We should only help those who can help us in return.

17. In the Parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:13-21, why did Jesus warn against storing up treasures for oneself?

- A) It distracts from serving God.
- B) It can lead to a false sense of security.
- C) Life is fleeting, and you cannot take your wealth with you.
- D) All of the above.

18. According to Malachi 3:10, what does God promise to those who bring the full tithe into His storehouse?

- A) They will experience poverty.
- B) He will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings.
- C) They will receive only physical blessings.
- D) They will gain personal wealth.

19. What does 1 Corinthians 4:2 say about the role of stewards?

- A) They are to be evaluated on the amount they produce.
- B) They are to be found faithful.
- C) They are to focus only on their personal interests.
- D) They are free to neglect their responsibilities.

20. In Luke 19:11-27, the Parable of the Ten Minas, what is the main lesson about stewardship?

- A) Faithfulness leads to reward.
- B) Wealth should be kept secret.
- C) Only the rich can be good stewards.
- D) It doesn't matter how much is entrusted to us.

Project 32 Update: *What is happening with Natural Church Development (NCD)?*

Over the last 18 months, the majority of the Moravian churches in the British Province have been going through the Natural Church Development Process. After three reports last month, here is a further update on what is happening in five more churches, and what difference it has made.

Gomersal Moravian Church

Our NCD questionnaire was completed in July 2024. 29 members completed the survey which is 88 % of the 33 members. The results of the questionnaire showed that 'Gift-Based Ministry' was our highest scoring factor, and 'Passionate Spirituality' was our lowest scoring factor.

As a result of these findings the Minister, Church Committee and the members of the Gomersal Congregation are continuing to work hard and are trying our best to take action on these points. For example, we now have a well-established Bible Study who meet once a month. Interactive Services based on God's Kingdom, Prayer, Forgiveness and Mission were enjoyed. Prayer group continues to meet monthly, using prayers that have been placed in the prayer basket. We have Care cards, Care bears and fresh flowers that continue to be given out to members of the community if and when are needed.

A new group is being started in September based on 'The History of the Moravian Church'. We are looking forward to these sessions and are hoping that learning about our history will help us find strength and confidence to talk about our 'Moravian Faith' to others. In addition, we also scored very highly on 'Loving Relationships' and 'Holistic Small Groups'. We continue to have a variety of small groups and various events that meet throughout the week and month such as Walking Group, Bowling Group, congregation meals, community events, coffee mornings, Ladies Fellowship, MWA and much, much more. The 'Girl Guides' also use our church hall for their weekly meetings. All this is providing a great opportunity to invite other people along.

May I say thank you to our Minister, Church Committee and every member of our congregation here at Gomersal for your continuous dedication and hard work. We will continue and try our best to have 'Passion' with 'Action', 'Believe' and 'Share', 'Love one another' and continue to move forward with a sense of 'Hope'.

Sr Victoria Wright

Ockbrook Moravian Church

Completed survey in February and presented results back to the congregation via PowerPoint on a Sunday as part of Sunday Service. Our total members number 40.

Our results showed an extremely well-balanced Church which although no surprise to us all but in itself presented a harder challenge. Our strongest three elements were loving relationships, Inspiring Worship Service and Gift-based Ministry. This shows a congregation happy and content with how things are at present so one can understand a reluctance to change anything.

Elements of Church life that scored lowest were: Need Oriented Evangelism and Holistic Small Groups.

Holistic Small Groups - it was suggested being a small congregation (around 20 to 25 attends on a regular basis) we are actually a holistic small group. We do however run regular



@ St Jojne Brewster

biweekly Bible Study with Phill Battelle and regular Saturday forums with Margaret Barker both of which are thought provoking and leads to spirited discussion.

Our basic issue is that we are a well-kept secret. Since the school closed, we are tucked away in the settlement away from the mainstream villages for whom we serve.

Our priority therefore was to raise awareness of both our Moravian Church and who and where we are. Jackie and I have often been asked 'What are Moravians?' We developed professional Moravian merchandise including free branded pens, notebooks, bookmarks with details of church service times and small notecards detailing a very short précis of our ancestry and faith. We also asked our wonderful congregation members to write a very short message each about why our Moravian Christian faith is important to us at Ockbrook and these messages were displayed on a large Moravian poster at the Garden Party and is still being displayed at the back of the Church today. We were delighted with the response our stand achieved with many visiting our stall which allowed us to engage in meaningful conversation.

An article in the Messenger by Br Jared Stephens in Ballinderry saw us inviting him to speak to our congregation one Sunday where he very kindly took the Worship service along with Joachim, our Minister. Joachim instigated a question-and-answer session which allowed Jared to talk about his remarkable success by 'Opening doors' and bringing his community into his Church. This is what we ultimately wish to achieve at Ockbrook by creating awareness of our wonderful Church life. Each week we add a small reminder of what our NCD plans are for the coming weeks and months in our weekly newsletter. This is in addition to a prayer we wrote for NCD which is included now in each service and in our weekly newsletter to help remind us all of the importance of embracing change in Our Lord's name.

'Dear Lord, we thank you for this beautiful church and our loving congregation where we can come in peace and love to worship You. We thank you for the opportunity that has been given us to reach out into our community to provide help and support to those in need and to welcome them into the comfort and sanctity of your love. Dear Lord, help us to embrace change and to discover new ways of communication so that others may experience the joy which we have in our connection to You. Amen.'

During the whole process of our experience with Natural Church Development we have been mindful of God's presence and His guiding and loving hand in what we are trying to achieve. This process has also been the motivating factor in both of us being welcomed into membership of the Moravian Church.

Srs Rose Turner and Jackie Flint

Queen's Park Free Church (Moravian)

Our NCD survey was completed April 2024. Our membership: six now seven plus three adherents.

- o Maximum factor: Gift-based Ministry.
- o Minimum factor: Passionate spirituality.

After analysis, discussion and prayer we felt a need to address the form of worship to make it less formal and more relevant to both the adults and children and therefore make it more accessible to any newcomers.

We are guided by Holy Habits with an emphasis on prayer and increasing faith. We sing more choruses in a group and learn new ones. We have purchased a projector and screen to help with new songs and to also help the children's talk be more memorable. We distribute daily bread books which some find useful. We organise bring and share lunches when we have visiting speakers and always have a drink and biscuits after the service.

We have purchased two djembe drums, new badminton and table tennis equipment which some members enjoy playing therefore helping us to be more interactive socially and help to break down barriers.

Our open day attracted some children especially when they saw the bouncy assault course and the games. We hope in the future that new people will come into the Sunday service because of this. However, we have had one new member join us this year and have had several visitors attending our worship for a certain period of time.

The minister is hoping to start a prayer and bible study group to help with our spirituality. We all have needs and rely on our prayers for others as well as ourselves.

We have engaged with Project 32 and have seen some small improvements but look forward to more change in the future. We appreciate the continued work and support of all the members and friends of the church during the years to increase the growth of our members and our spirituality.

Br Charles Hatton and Sr Cathy Friend

Hornsey Moravian Church

Above-average results were achieved, though several areas require improvement. The lowest score occurred in Small Groups, primarily because many groups ceased following COVID. During the December Committee meeting, strategies and an action plan were developed after extensive discussion.

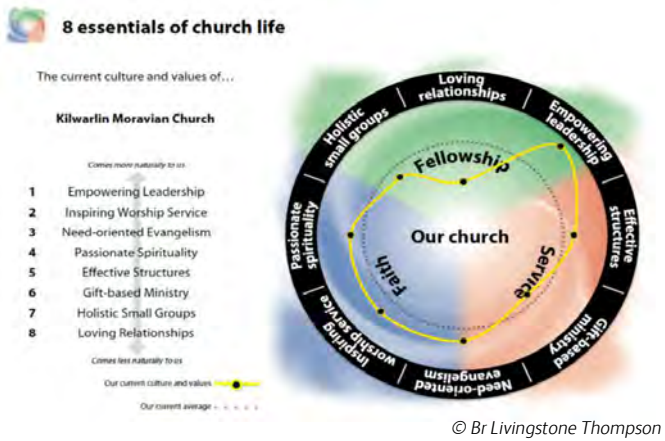
It was decided to initiate a Prayer Group on WhatsApp, accessible via mobile phone, and a Bible study group on Zoom. Both groups have shown positive outcomes so far. The prayer group includes participants from the USA, Canada, Jamaica, and the UK.

Efforts are underway to reinstate the MWA and Men's Fellowship groups. Leaders for the MWA have been elected, with the first meeting expected within the next four weeks.

Adjustments are being made to services to increase inclusivity for various age groups, such as reviewing hymn choices and involving multiple individuals in readings instead of relying on one reader. The Daily Watchword is distributed on WhatsApp by Br Livingston and Sr Carol Ackah, and subsequently shared with most church members, friends, and family home and abroad, providing value particularly to those with sight impairments. The Steel Band is now incorporated more frequently into services.

In the last 12 months we have sadly lost three members. But with God's Grace and Mercy we have also gained three new members.

Sr Patricia White



© Br Livingstone Thompson

Kilwarlin NCD Journey

Kilwarlin Moravian congregation NCD journey formally begun in middle of 2024. We had hoped that someone, other than the minister would be the NCD champion but that didn't materialise. It turned out to be fine, as it simply meant that NCD matters were easily inserted in weekly worship, by the minister.

With 22 in membership virtually everyone including regular visitors, completed the survey. It took some time to upload the results from the paper responses, as only about 50 % of the questionnaires were completed online.

There was some anticipation and a little trepidation waiting to hear the results of the survey. As NCD Champion I wanted it to be treated with some weight, so there was a long lead-in time. The results were first discussed with the Church Committee and then presented to the whole congregation.

The results were surprising: the maximum factor for the congregation was empowering leadership. However, there was some confusion as to why loving relationships was the minimum factor. The confusion was deepened because unlike many other congregations, there was tea and coffee fellowship every Sunday after worship. We eventually accepted that there were relationship issues that needed to be addressed, and it had to do with more than just tea and coffee fellowship.

Finding a way to translate these results into actions was challenging. It was not easy each Sunday to speak in a way that implied that members didn't love each other. We needed to find a way to address the issue.

We started having coffee and conversation sessions away from the congregation. Immediately after church each fourth Sunday, everyone would meet at a café nearby, to have a time when we sat and chatted. Our coffee and conversation sessions were to be an ongoing feature, as we sought to strengthen the bonds of fellowship.

In a congregation meeting, we then discussed those things we would do differently arising from the NCD survey. We agreed that the actions should be clear, doable and in everyone's reach.

It was a simple to-do list: everyone could attend consistently, intentionally invite others to attend worship, welcome new attendees warmly and participate regularly in the fellowship gatherings, especially our fourth Sundays Coffee and Conversation.

We will have to wait to see how these actions and activities will affect the life of the congregation. However, the exercise has given us a new hope that congregation life can be renewed and that there could even be meaning renewal and numerical growth.

The journey continues!

Rev Livingstone Thompson



'What I Believe'

- Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves
interviews Br Peter Gubi

Br Peter is a Moravian Minister serving the Fairfield Congregation in the Lancashire District and is also Professor of Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment at the University of Chester.

Tell us a bit about your background, family and education

I grew up in Barbados and moved to England in 1975 at the age of twelve. My parents and grandparents served the Moravian Church in the Eastern West Indies Province and the British Province. I attended Harrison College in Barbados and Fulneck School in Yorkshire. I trained to be a teacher of Religious Studies, and a Counsellor, after leaving school. I have gone on to achieve eight degrees in Counselling and Theology at various universities.

How and when did you come to faith?

Faith has always been a central part of my life. I grew up in a Christian home where God was central to all that we did and were (grace at mealtimes; daily family prayers in the morning and at bedtime; open discussion of faith issues whenever they arose). I studied World Religions at University and have encountered God in non-Christian faiths and in people of no faith. I am embarrassed by, and angry at, some forms of Christianity and intolerant theological positions - especially when the harmful pastoral consequences of principled positions are evident.

What led you into the ministry in the Moravian Church?

With my grandfather being a Moravian Bishop, and my Father and Uncle being Moravian Ministers, I grew up with the expectation of others that I would become a Moravian Minister - which I resisted for many years. Instead, I explored my vocation through education and counselling, but I always felt that I was dancing around a pond and I eventually had to take the plunge as the calling to ministry wouldn't go away. All of the education, learning and pastoral insight/skills that I have gained in my journey have proved useful in ministry - so I have no regrets about the delay. In fact, I have grown immeasurably because of it.

How do you integrate your university life with your calling as a minister?

I love the variety in my life that ministry and academic life give me. They feed each other and nurture me. I love the intellectual stimulation that academia gives me. I am a practitioner-researcher, and through my practice, research and publications, I have contributed to making the exploration of the spiritual dimension more acceptable in counselling and psychotherapy, and the integration of spiritual resources, like prayer, more ethical in therapeutic practice. I am an advocate of pastoral supervision and reflective practice groups for supporting clergy, enhancing clergy wellbeing and developing clergy theologically. For me, ministry and academia integrate very well, and I have

folks coming to me from all over the world to supervise their doctoral work in these areas of research, which also feeds me, and therefore my ministry.

What has been your greatest joy in ministry and what have you struggled with?

I love leading worship, teaching and pastoral visiting. I am profoundly touched when I accompany the dying and the families of the dying. It is a privilege to be trusted. I struggle with my strong imposter syndrome; with seeing the Church and God blamed for human errors; with the work of the Church sabotaged by dynamics that it often has no control over; with the pressure on the congregations to 'change' and 'grow' (but from 'what' to 'what' is never clear); by the decline of the Church and by the apathy of society.

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

Yes. The last time that I was angry with God was when Sr Jayne Clarke, a truly wonderful person and a very active member of Dukinfield congregation, where I was serving at the time, was called, at a young age, into Higher Service. I struggled to contain my anger with God when conducting her funeral - such was my, and the congregation's, sense of loss of her, which made no sense at all.

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

Having stared the possibility of death full-on this summer, when I had open-heart surgery, I have to acknowledge that I was intensely scared - until I managed to gain a sense of peace through prayer, and a place of surrender. I explored my sense of hypocrisy with my wise pastoral supervisor, who quietly reminded me that Christ was full of anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, before surrendering to the Father's will on his way to be crucified. It is OK to be scared and still believe in resurrection.

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

Ignorance and apathy mainly. Christians have lost their confidence to share their faith (and I don't mean Bible-bashing but simply openly attributing their blessings to God and sharing how faith has helped them through difficulties). People have lost sight of how beneficial faith is for building resilience in life. They don't know the value of prayer and spiritual discipline, or the merits of sacrifice over entitlement. Maybe they aren't seeing a difference in us that Christ makes.

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

I love Dan Brown's books, or any book or article that gives me a different insight on understanding scripture in a way that I had never considered before.

The place where you feel closest to God?

In encounter with others, in nature, in Church, in my garden, in accompanying death - anywhere where the veil between heaven and earth is at its thinnest.

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

His presence made a difference.

Midlands District Flourishing: Growth, Community, and Creation Care

The Moravian Midlands District gathered recently for its conference, and the reports from our four congregations paint an encouraging picture of churches engaging with their communities, welcoming new members, and caring for God's creation.

Growing Together in Faith

Across the district, congregations are welcoming new members and celebrating significant milestones. Leicester has received four new members and launched something special: monthly midweek services on Wednesdays that combine half-hour worship with social time. It's proving a wonderful way to offer worship to those who can't make Sundays.

At Ockbrook, Rose and Jackie were recently confirmed and are already active members. The congregation successfully celebrated its 275th anniversary with a garden party that drew the local mayor - a testament to the church's ongoing community presence.

Hall Green received two new members, both URC ministers, and celebrated three infant baptisms with over 180 people in attendance. These joyful occasions remind us that our churches remain vital centres of Christian life and celebration.

Reaching Beyond Our Walls

Perhaps the most striking theme across the district is how our congregations are engaging with their wider communities. Hall Green's Friendly Corner Café serves

40-60 people every Tuesday morning, while their newly appointed administrator Samantha helps develop their YouTube channel with service recordings.

Leicester's Highfields Community Project launched with a grand opening in June and exemplifies what Christian witness can look like in our diverse society. The project brings together Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and the Polish community - a beautiful expression of working together for the common good. Leicester also has exciting events ahead: their church anniversary on 15th-16th November features a Caribbean meal and jazz band followed by an anniversary service, their first-ever Christmas party, and a visit from Leicester Cathedral Choir on 11th January 2026.

Ockbrook maintains strong links with Derby City Mission and Wesley Hall Community Centre in Leicester and is developing a relationship with the 'Over the Wall' charity based at the former Ockbrook School site.

Caring for Creation

Environmental stewardship emerged as a significant priority. Leominster is converting part of their churchyard into a meadow while replacing a dying birch tree avenue with diverse wildlife-friendly trees. Their newly renovated organ will be dedicated with a sung Eucharist featuring the Harare Singers - blending care for heritage with environmental responsibility.

Ockbrook is researching energy efficiency

measures for their listed building, exploring window refurbishment and secondary glazing. Hall Green is reviewing the updated criteria for the silver eco-church award they achieved in 2019.

Looking Ahead

The district is planning another joint evening service, possibly at Hall Green, for Palm Sunday 2026 (29th March). There's also excitement about hosting the German Moravian Brass Band in early August 2026: 8-10 professional musicians and their families will perform in the London area before visiting Ockbrook and Leicester.

A request was made to restart regular training sessions for lay preachers, recognising the importance of ongoing formation and mutual support. Edwin promised to follow up with the Church Service Committee.

Facing Challenges with Hope

Leominster acknowledged challenges with an aging membership, but their response demonstrates resilience: all members serve on committee, and they're receiving support through Churches Together, NCD, and holy habits.

As Rev Mark Meatcher from Hall Green prepares for sabbatical in North India from January to April 2026, the district continues its pattern of growth, service, and faithful witness. Our churches may be different in size and context, but together we're flourishing.

Br Blair Kessler

Br Dick Porter reports on the Yorkshire District Autumn Conference

Provincial Board member David Howarth presented the Provincial Board Report to the YDC which was held at Gomersal.

Fulneck School closed in July after 272 years, due to falling numbers and increased costs.

Br Howarth advised that the Assessments for each congregation does not cover the cost of ministry. The Board had engaged BDO UK to support a financial review, which will include an analysis of the past three years and financial projections to 2028.

Delegates at the conference were told that no future ministers were in training and there was no short-term prospect of that.

The contribution of lay workers and the identification of opportunities for lay ministry are vital for the future of the Province. It was suggested that the creation of three regions for collaborative working: Northern Ireland, the North of England and the South of England. This will provide additional support for ministers, enabling regional youth workers and the development of regional administration.

With regard to congregational life and morale, the need for stronger ministry for young people was highlighted, accepting that younger people often seek different church styles, while older members hold different expectations.

Reports were given from each congregation. Br James Woolford, for Baildon, reported that membership was 14, with three adherents. Parade services had been more infrequent. Christingle was the best-attended event, with 52 present. The beer festival had also been a success, although numbers had been hit by Bradford City's final game of the season. Sr Patsy Holdsworth has now been called to serve Baildon.

At Fulneck, 48 people were members, with average attendance 33 and 23 at Holy Communion. Christingle services attracted 120 people. The church committee played an active role in reviving cafe church. Celebratory events that have drawn people to church include

(Continues overleaf)

Yorkshire District Autumn Conference

(Continued from overleaf)

the Christmas Tree and Starlight Festival, a brass band concert, a performance of The Messiah, Sound the Trumpet and the Hope Street Consort Singers.

During the interregnum, the pastoral care of the congregation has been done by a team of three volunteers and the six members of church committee. A highly successful event in summer, linked to Come Alive in 25, saw children and parents taking part in crafts and storytelling centred around Noah's Ark.

Having had 50 weeks without a minister, the church committee worked well together and rose to the challenges, with the pulpit-supply secretary arranging ministers, retired ministry and lay preachers to lead services.

At Gomersal, average attendance was 21. Of deep concern is the financial situation, and to tackle this, Sunday worship had been held on the lines of stewardship.

Horton, it was said, 'continues to be active in welcoming whoever comes through the church doors, be it for a coffee morning or Sunday service'. Sr Claire Maxwell went on to praise lay preachers and the 'eloquent' style of cafe church. The Women's Fellowship also received praise.

Lower Wyke has 30 members after membership classes introduced four new attendees. The church still hosts a busy diary of events, including art festival, Proms in the Paddock and scarecrow festival.

Wellhouse congregation is also precariously placed, said Br Cooper, with 10 members, although special events had increased numbers.

Sr Diane Thornton said the Moravian Singers had been reduced to 15 after Br John McOwat and Sr Beth McOwat had decided to call it a day. Sr Thornton said: 'They have been faithful members, hardly ever missing a rehearsal.' Br Woolford and son James had also left, Br Woolford having moved to Dukinfield. But she said the choir was still a cohesive fun-loving group who enjoyed making music together.

After discussion, it was decided the January 2026 Fellowship Morning would not take place but will be re-considered in the future.

Br and Sr Gledhill (Lower Wyke) have completed the lay preachers' course provided by Northern College. They are to be congratulated, and their names added to the lay preachers' list.

Sr Cathy Gledhill was elected chair of District Conference 2026 and Br Cooper as vice chair.

Bedford Queens Park, Bedfordshire

Br Daniel and Sr Sharon Steele celebrated 20 years of marriage with a rededication of marriage vows. The church was packed, and guests arrived in 1950 vintage bus.

Br John Muncaster, son of our former minister, was received into membership with the right hand of fellowship reception on Sunday 14th September.

At our open day on Saturday 20th September, we had a bouncy castle and assault course. Also from the funds we received from the Board for children's activities we purchased two tom-tom drums, small and large craft equipment as these were available. On the day children were waiting outside to use the assault course and a video for music



Two trees planted at Bedford in 2022 following the Mission and Society Committee's request are growing strong.

dancing was on show in the church on the projector screen. Badminton and table tennis bats and nets were purchased to use all the money up allocated. The tom tom drums were used during a service, and we marched when we played them.

Br Eric Moore

Leominster Moravian Church, Herefordshire

A big thank you to Joy Owens for this beautiful tribute to our wonderful forces for Remembrance Sunday. Thank you, Joy. It really is lovely.

Sr Dulcie Scott



© Sr Dulcie Scott

Crochet Café / Knit 'n' Natter at Ockbrook, Derbyshire

For the past few years, I have been volunteering at the local Repair Café, where there is also a 'Crochet Café'. People (so far, all ladies) can sit at a table with other crocheters and enjoy a hot drink and a biscuit together, while chatting and doing crochet.

When we had the results of the NCD survey at our church, the one that jumped out at me was our shortage of small groups.

The beginning of an idea came into my head: why not start a 'Crochet Café' at our church? I talked to some of the ladies at the Repair Café and found there was plenty of demand for another one.

Not wanting to exclude non-crocheters, I decided to call it 'Crochet Café / Knit 'n' Natter'. One weekday afternoon per month seemed the right frequency, at least to start with.

So, cakes baked, spare yarn, crochet hooks and knitting needles to hand, we held our first on last Friday. I had expected maybe six people at best, but was



© Sr Julie Hague

amazed when 14 ladies turned up, plus one baby! Only five were from our church, the rest had seen it advertised on social media.

It was lovely! One of our members, Sr Margaret Barker, taught two ladies how to crochet, and by the end of the afternoon, both had produced their first ever pieces of crochet.

The tea, coffee and cakes went down well and several of the ladies remarked on how warmly welcoming they had found the group.

We will be running them on the first Friday afternoon of each month, in our meeting room, so if you are passing, do pop in and give it a try!

Sr Julie Hague

Fetter Lane Moravian Church, London - Men's Fellowship Event

On Sunday the 12th of October the Men's Fellowship group of the Fetter Lane congregation held a special meeting. Our aim was to

celebrate the life and work of Jan Amos Kominsky (Comenius) the Czech educationalist. Born in 1592 Comenius became known as 'The Great Educator' and is considered by many to be the father of modern didactics - he was also Bishop of the Unity of Brethren as well as a philosopher and refugee, displaced from his homeland by war and persecution.

Our meeting had two parts; first our group spent an hour considering the life, history and principles of universal education that Comenius espoused. Then thinking on the restless nature of Comenius' life a few of us travelled to the Queens Arms pub in Battersea where they serve a fine Czech lager from the Bohem Brewery named after him: a walk of about two and a half miles. On this occasion only a couple of us made it as far as the pub but we hope to make this a regular occurrence in recognition of an influential and truly interesting figure historically linked with our church community. At the pub we enjoyed a few pints of Amos beer and some traditional grilled sausage with mustard, horseradish, bread and pickles. We look forward to running this event regularly in the future and if you would like to join us next time please get in touch.

The Queens Arms - Bohem Brewery | Craft Beer | Micro Brewery
www.bohembrewery.com/the-queens-arms

Br Herbert Daly

© Br Herbert Daly



MORYAC 2026

Training Opportunity for Youth, Family and Sunday School Leaders

Theme: Cultural Preparation - how to prepare your church for a thriving youth and families ministry.

Hayes Centre, Swanwick DE55 1AU
from 9th to 11th October 2026
25 Places Available
£50

2 spaces are being held for each congregation initially at booking.

If your Sunday School / Youth team is bigger than 2 we will attempt to accommodate you once we have established numbers.

To register initial interest please email
Rev. Claire Maxwell: claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk
There will be a form she will send you to fill in.

THE BRITISH PROVINCE OF THE UNITAS FRATRUM (MORAVIAN CHURCH). Charity number: 251211

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Christmas

Church House will be closed from 1pm on Friday 19th December until Monday 5th January 2026.

The Provincial Board and all the staff at Church House send heartfelt Christmas greetings to our brothers and sisters across the British Province, and to our faithful partners in South Asia and Western Tanzania.

As we gather once again around the story that changed the world: the quiet, astonishing arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ; may you know the peace, love, and steady hope that He brings. However, busy the season may become, please remember that His light still cuts through all the noise.

The year gone has been a challenging year for our Province and beyond. Firstly, we remember with sorrow our friend and colleague Lindsey, who passed in 2025, and give thanks for her life, faithful service, and the love she shared. We also mark with gratitude the history of Fulneck School and how it honoured generations of learning, faith, and community that have been nurtured within its walls. And finally, we remember our sisters and brothers in our sister province of Jamaica and pray that even in the midst of all that they face the Light of Christ will continue to shine in their hearts.

Looking toward the year ahead, we pray that 2026 will be marked by renewed courage and clear purpose as we continue our shared witness. May God strengthen us by His presence, guide us by His wisdom, and hold us fast in His unchanging love.

A blessed Christmas, and every grace for the New Year.

Provincial Diary for December

4	British Mission Board meeting	Online
	Mission and Society Committee meeting	Online
10-11	Provincial Board meeting	Church House

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Received into Membership

9th November 2025 Annette Woolford Dukinfield

DATES TO REMEMBER

- 1 World Aids Day (www.worldaidsday.org)
- 3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 10 Human Rights Day (www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/)
- 14-22 Hanukkah - Jewish
- 18 International Migrants Day (www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/)
- 21 Winter Solstice
- 25 Christmas Day
- 31 New Year's Eve / Watchnight

Hurricane Melissa Appeal - British Province

Hurricane Melissa made landfall in Westmoreland, close to New Hope, the site of the Moravian Camp on Tuesday 28th October 2025. It unleashed devastation across the western and central parishes of Jamaica. These communities are home to 36 Moravians congregations across the Central and Western District Conferences, and everyone of these has sustained damage, and several have been destroyed.

The news from the Provincial Board in Jamaica is heartbreaking. We know that lives have been lost. Homes have been destroyed; families displaced; belongings gone.

Springfield Moravian, one of the oldest congregations in province has been reduced to bare stone and debris. The congregations at Carmel and Salem, and the long-standing fixtures in Westmoreland, have been flattened. Faith Moravian in Luana is gone. Beaufort has been destroyed after rebuilding from previous storms. Entire roofs torn away at Lacovia, Dober, Middle Quarters, New



Carmel Moravian Church before and after

© Moravian Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Fulneck, Carisbrook, and many others. Manses, schools, community spaces have been severely impacted.

But it is not only buildings. Communities already vulnerable still face blocked roads, unsafe water, and there is scarcity in shelter. Congregations that have shaped the spiritual life of their communities for generations now lie in rubble.

In the first phase of their disaster response plan, the church in Jamaica is providing emergency aid including food packs, water, clothing and hygiene items. They are also providing spiritual and psychological first aid. Assessments continue as communication lines reopen. The road to recovery will be long.

How we in the British Province can respond

The British Province launched an appeal to provide critical relief to communities and provincial coordination. Funds will be sent through the Moravian Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, and trusted partners. We are grateful for all the support that has been received, the prayerful and the practical.

The direct appeal is available:
<https://justgiving.com/campaign/hurricanemelissaappeal>

and through our website
www.moravian.org.uk/hurricane-melissa-appeal

The Provincial Board,
British Province



Daily Watchwords 2026

The Daily Watchwords for 2026 are available to order from Church House and are available to order. The cost per each copy is £8.00, plus postage and packaging, but we will endeavour to deliver as many as possible via what many of us know as 'Moravian Mail', i.e., when someone visits Church House or when a member of the Provincial Board is in a particular part of the Province.

Please submit your order to Sr Gladys Korsah in the Bookroom at: gladys.korsah@moravian.org.uk



Moravian Stars

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

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

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

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

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

Please contact Sr Gladys Korsah at Church House for more details on **020 8883 3409** or email office@moravian.org.uk

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