MORAVIAN MESSENGER

JANUARY 2025

'LG': 'Life's good'!

The brand of my Television is 'LG' which originally stood for 'Lucky Goldstar'. Although I hardly watch TV, when I do switch it on the at present associated marketing tagline 'Life's Good' would be displayed.

It's good to begin the new year on a positive note.

Life is good. When I walk around the fields behind the Moravian Settlement in Ockbrook and see the cat playing in the grass, when I see the lush green fields and listen to the birds, when I meet people walking their dogs and striking up a friendly conversation, I can wholeheartedly say, 'Life's good'. When I think about sitting with friends over a good meal and exploring the depth of life or just having a good time, when I see the grandchildren growing up happily, when I notice the goodwill and mutual support in our churches and communities in Ockbrook and Leicester, including Wesley Hall Community Centre, and also including all communities which you, the reader, may have in mind, what else can I say but, 'Life's good'.

I am fully aware of the fact that there is also the other side of the coin. (All names in the following paragraphs are not the real names of the people).

Much hardship is going on. Andrew was living in a shed for 18 years! He is now supported by a charity so he can have a fresh start in life, and he is ever so grateful.

I think of Gunda who suffers from regular seizures. She was evicted from her house. Since then, she is sofa-surfing with friends and acquaintances. Her two children are looked after by her parents.

I think of Jamal and his wife Amna, with their children Yasir and Roua. They fled the cruel war in Sudan. Jamal came first. His journey was tremendously risky, and he was fortunate enough to survive. His wife could follow him legally, and the children were born here.

Amna's dad is displaced in Sudan, her mum lives in a refugee camp in Chad, and many of their relatives and friends either died in the war or are unreachable and their fate is unknown.

Countless people are struggling in our part of the world and across the world.

Life's good? There are the holy moments when life is good even when most people would say it is not.

I think of Kira on her deathbed. I can see the smile and the peace on her face. I know that deep conversations preceded her illness before it became terminal. Conversations that included forgiveness for wrongs done or suffered, conversations that brought a deep peace to all around Kira and to herself.

We live in a time when we as Christians are challenged in many ways. This prompts us to think anew about our calling.

When I had the opportunity of speaking with a Cuban colleague of mine about the purpose of the church, he said something that stayed with me ever since, 'The church is a hospital'.

(Continues inside on page 3)

The Uganda Mission Trip

(page 4)

Dear Brothers and Sisters

You don't need me to remind you that
times world-wide, but there is one part
speak today and that is the condition
Most denominations have shrinking
dance figures. Some are

A letter for Church Sunday

(page 5)

British Mission Board News

(page 6)

Editorial

Snowdrops and new hope

I can't wait for the snowdrops to emerge on Sisters Walk in Gracehill. It is the beautiful quiet gentle sign that spring is on its way, and the cold earth is waking. Similarly, I can't wait for new life to flourish in our Church. It has been a long lean time with falling numbers in membership and fewer people coming together for worship.

Like the snowdrops, part of that is to do with the cycle of the seasons: the snowdrops come with the beginning of spring, bluebells with the promise of summer, roses in full warmth and autumn colours as the temperature drops and the daylight wanes. So it often is with Churches and the society around them. We have been through a very difficult time when it has been hard to be a Christian, not thank God in terms of persecution but, in terms of the society in which we live. Church has seemed to be dated, irrelevant and hindering human rights. And perhaps we as worshipping Christians and members of these Churches are to blame for this too!

So what to do? An analysis of our situation as a Church seemed like a sensible way of approaching the issue, and so the Natural Church Development survey was adopted to be undertaken by nearly all the Churches in our province. This was designed to show our most positive attributes and those things that are holding us back. The image used was of a bucket with a hole in it. The top of the bucket was our best attribute - our maximum factor but the bucket can only fill permanently to where the hole is, filled past this point it will always leak until it settles back at this point, our minimum factor.

The survey showed that there were many good points in our Churches. Many Churches reported that Gift Based ministry was very good in their Churches: people's gifts and contributions in many ways counted and were valued. Other strong points were loving relationships, people got on well and cared about each other; although I do want to enter a caveat here - when people are in cohesive caring groups it can then be very difficult for others to join in, it can become cliquish and off putting to those just coming into the fellowship.

The most common limiting or hole in the bucket feature was passionate spirituality. This is not a matter of having a band in Church and lots of worship songs but more about having a deep faith and being able to talk about our faith, praying together and allowing Jesus to make a difference in our lives. So we can be great on worship, caring for each other and serving in the Church, but if we never talk personally and honestly about our faith, we are more like a tin can with no filling, empty in the middle.

The NCD survey based on members, not just ministers perceptions, has shown us a lot. It has given us a base and ground to work on. Churches have been encouraged to look at the results and then make a plan to address the issues that it has highlighted and it has been great to read the results from eight of the churches in the November and December issues of the Moravian Messenger. We have seen that Bible studies have been started, worship services reviewed, bring and share lunches to build fellowship, revision of the Holy Habits programme and starting prayer groups and prayer triplets.

In this new year, the plan is to ask Churches to repeat the survey and compare the results with the last time it was done. It should be much quicker this time as we are all aware of what and how it needs to be done. I am gently and quietly confident that there will be signs of spring, not dramatic, but just as beautiful and significant as the snowdrops on Sisters Walk.

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team

Letter to Editorial Team

Regarding Sr Sarah's Editorial in last month's issue: not all of us are privileged to be living in peace. Tell some of us we are privileged to live by food banks, tell some of us we are privileged to be homeless, tell some of us we are privileged to live in water poverty, fuel poverty, etc.

It is a tragedy that the UK, being privileged to be the 6th richest nation on God's Earth, that so many of us are underprivileged. We as Christians know who they are. We already pray for them and have done so for, almost, my lifetime. The Christian question is, for how much longer will I and others need to carry on praying for the underprivileged? And remember the number of Christians praying is disminishing.

My God is telling us to use our precious democracy to achieve what we pray to our Creator for.

We Moravians must wake up, and be aware of how to make our democracy work for us as we constantly pray for the underprivileged.

Yours for Christ's sake,

Br Alan Holdsworth

Our article this month comes from Br James Woolford, member of the Youth and Children's Committee.

Together in Wonder:
How Movies and Faith Connect Us

Over the Christmas period myself and my family have enjoyed settling down and watching a film. Whether that is a Christmas movie, with my personal favourite being the *Muppets Christmas Carol*, or a big box office blockbuster like *Wicked: For Good*, there is something wonderful about spending time together in different world for a few hours.

A lot has been made recently about the decline in shared experiences of entertainment. With children and young people becoming increasingly isolated by their phones and social media, people feel that the days of gathering together and sharing an experience have passed. However, that is not a universal truth and there are signs that people are carving that communal experience once more.

From the dawn of humanity people have gathered together, shared stories and felt the warmth of others around them. Stories have great power to connect and to teach ourselves about human and divine nature and sharing them together only amplifies that experience.

There have been countless times when we've been watching a film and one of my children has made a deep point about it or asked a thoughtful question. Take the movie *Wicked* for example. For those not familiar with the story, it is a prequel to the *Wizard of Oz* and tells things from the point of view of the good witch, Gelinda and the wicked witch Elphaba before they were given their titles and when they met in school and formed an unlikely friendship. Alongside the dramatic effects and soring, memorable songs, is a really deep message about discrimination, prejudice and societies need to scapegoat people as good or wicked. During the film my youngest child Charlotte (who is 9) turned to me outraged at how Elphaba was being treated just because she was green and how that wasn't fair or right. My hope is that this film and experience will help her to spot when it is happening in the real world as we use these fictional spaces to explore real world issues. We were able to talk about big things like racism and discrimination through a lens that was approachable and accessible.

The church can learn much from this and from the world of entertainment in general. Firstly, the need for community is still present in our children and young people who still crave shared experiences, even if they don't always know how to express that need. Secondly, the need to speak to them in a language they understand and explore big issues using varied methods that make it accessible to them. And finally, that we must not shy away from tackling big subject and we must truly listen to their voices as they explore the world around them.

Let us use our community to embrace the wonder of the world and explore our faith as a community of people gathered in love and imagination.

'LG': 'Life's good'! *(Continued front front page)*

In life we are not continuously on one side. There might be times when we are more the patient, and times when we are more the nurse or doctor; times when we are more in need to receive and times when we have more to give; or there could even be a relative balance between the two.

In any case, I firmly believe that as long as we are pilgrims in the world, we are called to support each other, and this could be anyone: our direct neighbour or those far away; and we must not forget those we may not naturally love or feel drawn to. After all, this is what Jesus did. He crossed many boundaries. He has eaten with those who were despised by the religious leaders. He engaged in conversation with those ostracised by society. In his presence healing and wholeness came to countless people.

I found this thoughtful quote, 'The gospel doesn't need a coalition devoted to keeping the wrong people out. It needs a family of sinners, saved by grace, committed to tearing down the walls, throwing open the doors, and shouting, 'Welcome! There's bread and wine. Come eat with us and talk.' This isn't a kingdom for the worthy; it's a kingdom for the hungry.' (Rachel Held Evans)

Life's good or at least is getting better when we join in in what God wants us to do: like Jesus, breaking down barriers and creating a space of welcome that in turn will become a space for increasing wholeness.

Friedrich von Bodelschwingh was a German pastor and health advocate born in 1831. He realised that life is not good for too many people, so he started a charity, Bodelschwinghsche Stiftungen Bethel, to help epileptic patients and which later cared for people who are marginalised in various ways. This organisation is still very effective today.

Bodelschwingh expressed how churches can live up to their calling when defining 'hospitality': 'The deepest meaning of hospitality is that we give each other a home on the way to our eternal home.'

We are all pilgrims in this world, and no-one can stay here forever.

So, isn't it the best thing to do, that we fore-shadow what will be, and that we help each other on our journey? Whatever background, religion, culture, nationality etc we come from, we have in common that we are in need of giving and accepting hospitality so that life can become good. We are woven together, and interconnected, not only with human beings but with all of creation.

When we experience the goodness of God running towards us, permeating and flowing from one to another, a joyful love for each other: Life's good.

Having just celebrated Christmas, we are reminded that God came in Jesus to share our journey through life. As followers of Jesus, we are called to share our journey, our love, with everyone we meet and interact with so that in the end we can say: Life's good.

Br Joachim Kreusel
Bishop of the Unitas Fratrum

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The Uganda Mission Trip

1st-11th November 2025

November the 1st was the day we flew out of Ireland to Uganda, making this our first trip for the church as a couple. Having been married for 39 years we had never done something like this, however, what awaited us in Uganda, East Africa, made it one of the greatest experiences in ministry.

Livingstone has been serving in the British Province since 2015 in Belfast and Hillsborough, Northern Ireland, and serves also on the Provincial Board; so on 1st November it was a wonderful feeling to know that the British Mission Board was kindly sending us out to Africa to see the work of two charities and the work of the Moravians in Uganda. Our flight took us through Dubai for a connecting flight to Entebbe.

Arriving on Sunday 2nd was a surreal feeling yet one of coming home. We were met by Ester, Morgan, Trinity and Sande from Tine on the Mountain Ministries (NGO). It was such a joy to finally embrace some of people we spoke to and about for seven years in person. What a blessing to have shared a meal and to discover that Morgan was celebrating his birthday that very day. Instant bonding took place. We were home in the hearts of these beautiful people and what warmth; what love; what acceptance! Our schedule involved visitation, participation and consultation; it was a fact-finding mission.

Starting Monday the 3rd we visited Ester's home; what an experience on roads unpaved; the dust factor was incredible, yet we were not discouraged, just intrigued. We worshiped with Pastor Florence, a friend of Ester's, at her church later that day. It was a true Pentecostal experience. Br Livingstone preached and I shared about my connection with Ester, all this through an interpreter.

On Tuesday we visited Josephine at her charity Gilgal Children. We shared a meal there and had beautiful fellowship especially as we prayed before leaving and singing 'Bind Us Together, Lord'.

Gilgal offers accommodation and education (mostly) for girls in social deprivation or at risk due to family circumstances. Referral of girls are made by local authorities or by individuals who know of the ministry. However, the organisation receives no direct state financial support. Instead, funding arises from individual goodwill and donations. The efforts of two persons in Ireland have, on a monthly basis, provided consistent help, but the YPMA of the Province contributed £2,000 a few years ago to the work in Uganda and this ministry also benefitted from this generous gift.

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Wednesday found us in the ghetto where Ester lived from age five years old until she was rescued by a stranger, which changed the course of her life: coming to Jesus, and surrendering herself to him as her Lord and Saviour, over 10 years ago. The visit was very emotional as we saw the place Ester called home once upon a time. The connection with the ghetto virtually was something unique. Over time, friends in Ireland would have given money for weekly feeding, erecting tents for covering during the rains, helping to bury the dead, and helping with other needs when they arose. However, it never prepared us for what it was truly like! The poverty, the dirt, the soot, the heat, the noise; it was overwhelming, yet the love received there will always be remembered.

Bridge for the Future Academy, a primary school started by Ester in Easter 2025, was visited on Thursday. It is a boarding school in a large house, with additional rooms being built on the site where 85 pupils are enrolled. Those who attend are mostly street children, and many of them from the ghetto Ester came from. The school is expanding at present with additional classrooms being erected. The children performed for us, which was very lively and moving. Their teachers are doing a great job.

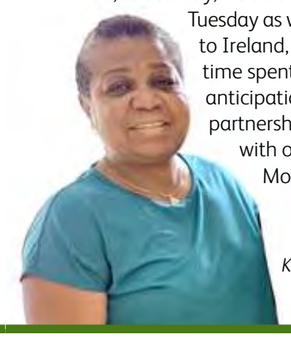
Friday was a rest day for me while Br Livingstone headed off to meet Br Julius of the Moravian Church and President of the PEC. They travelled by ferry to Buvuma, an island on Lake Victoria where there are three Moravian congregations. The initiation of Moravian work on the island led the authorities to open a road for vehicular traffic, with the hope of electricity connection coming soon. Br Livingstone planted a tree and fellowshipped with those who gathered in the school house. He also visited the Moravian congregation in Kanjuki, where they are building a new church.

Saturday was a lovely time with the teens at the Tine Ministries residence. We had such a beautiful time eating KFC, having a chat and picture taking. The opportunity to share together mutual love and respect was such a blessing. I got an opportunity to meet in person the young men I have been communicating with virtually since 2019. Being called Mommy and Daddy was very special and having Junior pray for us was touching.

Sunday was a rest day for me and another opportunity for Br Livingstone and Br Julius to meet with and fellowship at two of the Moravian congregations at Roho and Buwooya. The Moravian Church in Uganda operates 10 local congregations, supports discipleship, education, outreach and church leadership. The piggery project, which is run by the women in Buwooya, is supporting about twenty families and has had an impact on the whole church. Br Livingstone was very impressed with the sense of community and sharing amongst the church families. He found his time with the brothers in leadership refreshing.

Monday the 10th was our last day. We had a mini conference with lunch at the hotel with a few teens from the Tine and Gilgal Ministries, along with the founders Ester and Josephine. Br Julius also joined as we saw this as an opportunity to share what life is now like with being part of the ministries and how we can work together in the future. The opportunity to have visited truly was a blessing as the fellowship we shared with our hosts and the service we received at the hotel made us feel at home.

So, reluctantly, we said our goodbyes on Tuesday as we headed home to Ireland, grateful for the time spent and with anticipation for greater partnership in the future with our beloved Moravian Church.



Sr Jean-Marie Thompson
Kells, County Meath, Ireland

A letter for Church Sunday (16 November) to the members and friends of the Moravian Church, British Province

Dear Brothers and Sisters

You don't need me to remind you that we are living in extremely difficult times world-wide, but there is one particular situation about which I must speak today and that is the condition and state of the Christian Church. Most denominations have shrinking, aging congregations and very low attendance figures. Some are working on rejuvenating schemes and living in blissful hope that using old, traditional customary thinking will help us through. We Moravians are not the exception here. I remember that we were having discussions about the supply of ministers about thirty years ago and the position is far worse now.

We spend a lot of time and effort propping up old customs and traditions which are much valued but how much time and effort do we put into seeking and living and talking with God? After all isn't this how the Church came about and what it was called to do? The earliest Christians were known as followers of the Way, and they tried to live as Jesus had lived, showing love of God in their words and deeds.

Since Jesus' time the world has experienced an explosion of knowledge and exploration and discovery and the Church theologians have countered this growth of knowledge with rules and regulations to keep power and control and make us all out to be miserable sinners needing forgiveness, whereas God's love is for all people. Yes! Everyone!

In the 15th century our forebearers rebelled about the Catholic Church and came into being in order to have the wine as well as the bread in communion and for the Bible and the services and hymns to be translated into the language of the people. Our church, the Unitas Fratrum, has always encouraged and supported the development of schools with education available to all.

We have been involved in big changes in the past. I firmly believe there is a need for a massive change in our thinking now while there is still some church left. (OR before it is too late).

I believe in a loving God, despite the absolutely awful situation in parts of today's world. The Bible has inconsistencies and places that show not a loving God but one responsible for judgement and slaughter. This is not my God. I try to follow Jesus who does say we should 'live life to the full'. That means knowing and experiencing the love of God personally ourselves as Jesus shows us in his life.

Today the church is thankful for all its ministers and for all the lay leaders of worship and all who serve in a wide variety of ways. What you are doing is appreciated, but we all need to know that we cannot go on as we are doing. In the change that has to come there will be a need for leaders of a new kind of church and we need volunteers to help us with a very different way of thinking. Do remember that the Gospels were not written when Jesus was alive but forty years after his death. We must be ready to ditch so much of the man-inspired theology that has wrapped itself around the essential teaching of Jesus. What people remembered was that Jesus came to show the need for peace and justice and above all the love of God. We must be leading people into a clearer understanding and experience of the love of God. A love that we can trust and inspires us with hope.

May God bless us all.

Br John McOwat
Episcupus Fratrum

PS. I recommend reading books by John Shelby Spong, particularly 'A new Christianity for a new world', which I have read many times. Also, 'God: naked at last' by Debbie Newson for Vanguard Press which I am reading and finding helpful.

© Sr Jane Carter

BRITISH MISSION BOARD NEWS

Northeast Moravian Women Ministry

Moravians in Northeast India

The Moravian Church in the northeast India district was born out of passion for education and development of Rongmei Community. In the midst of opposition, persecution and various struggles Br Kagauchung Rongmei Naga established the Moravian Church in 1983 (officially in 1984) in Binnakandi and later in other parts of the Northeast district. The Moravians here now have three congregations (Binnakandi, Latingkhal, and Haflong) and one fellowship (Silchar Moravian Fellowship) in this district.

Initially it began with house fellowship of five family members, then a women's conference was organised for the first time in 1983 encouraged by Sr Peace Kundan, and the Moravians grew in numbers and in spirit. The women's conference which became the Annual General Conference in 2018, serves as a force that drives other important ministerial, spiritual and administrative decisions and activities.

Yearly Prayer Visit

Once a year the women from Latingkhal, Haflong, Binnakandi and Silchar get together for a prayer visit to all the congregations. The trip helps to strengthen women's bond in fellowship and foster spiritual growth as they do fasting prayers, and house visits. The yearly prayer visit has seen many women encouraged and partaking and getting together in ministry. Sharing their struggle, stories and burden, upholding one another in prayer and support is taken as a blessed opportunity for encouragement and an opportunity to grow closer to God.

Annual Northeast Moravian Women's Conference

The annual conference is an important event for Northeast Moravian women where they are spiritually nourished. The Conference consists of rich spiritual events helping them to excel and grow in the Lord. The Bible knowledge quiz, music and singing competition, bible study, thematic sermon and discussion for the future and growth of the ministry, all adds to the joyful and vibrant spiritual experience. The social gathering in the evening for singing after dinner adds to the joyful rich spiritual experience making the Conference memorable and building the bonds stronger in the Lord and with one another. The partaking in preparation of meal during the conference is an experience of shared fellowship the women treasure.

The Conference also is an opportunity for the women to use their gifts and bring their handmade products and others business related products for sale which is then used for the women's funds.

Fund Raising Events

Money or tools that are needed in all kinds of works and ministry are important assets and that is why it is also important that there are funds to regulate, run and support the ministry of women in God's service. So as stated the women in making themselves self-reliant and independent in terms of finances, raise funds in many ways, one of which is using their talent to work, create, produce and bring it for sale in the Conference for the women's ministry funds.

Women dedicate their hand-crafted traditional cloth, bag, broom, vegetables etc., for the Conference, the sale of which funds the ministry.

MORAVIAN CHURCH, BINNAKANDI

Binnakandi Moravians began their church worship services from a bamboo thatched house and temporarily in a Moravian school building. Later with the help of local members support and other donations, the new building on land purchased for this purpose was constructed, and the worship service continues in the very same way till this date.

There are about 30 family members in the congregation and it continues with the ministry and fellowship under pastoral care of Br Nathaniel Gengmei.

Women's Ministry in Binnakandi

Spiritually, the women have been very vibrant and effective in the ministry of the Church and have played a major role in many ministerial aspects. They are very dedicated to the fellowship, and their zeal for the Lord and His kingdom can be seen in their personal life and in their participation in all kinds of prayer and worship ministry.

The women fasted once every month praying for the ministry, and the growth of the church as a whole, followed by weekly fellowship gatherings where women take part in leading, sharing and promoting priesthood of all believers and encouraging younger women to serve the Lord. The women got together on Sunday after church to visit families and pray for them especially those in need and crisis. While not only limiting to Sundays, but as and when there is need, they never fail to visit and pray for the people.

The women have an annual general meeting where major decisions regarding the ministry are taken. The meeting encourages younger women to be more involved in the ministry and take a lead in all of ministry while the older women guide and directs them. The works and ministry of the women are reported and reviewed for further growth and improvements.

With the realisation of the need for money for any work, the women actively dedicate themselves in works toward raising funds in various ways including in the form of regular and monthly collection of rice and money. At the same time, they are using their talent and gifts for small group business like the sale of vegetables, any useful products or by means of handicrafts and other handiworks.

The funds raised are then used for ministerial need and people in need like medicine for sick, help for funerals, stipends for the evangelist or for sponsoring students etc.

BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION OF LATINGKHAL MORAVIAN CHURCH

Latingkhal congregation has about twenty communicant members and shares a similar story of people migrating to the place for livelihood and eventually beginning a Moravian Church. The history of the church at Latingkhal also marks an important step under the leadership of Deacon Kakuamei in removing the stone that was worshipped as a god by the Rongmei non-believers. The stone was worshipped as the guardian of the village according to the Rongmei tribal religious belief. For a long time, due to the lack of an ordained minister, Latingkhal Church was led by the Elder Br Machunsingpou Ruangmei. Presently, the congregation has five families under the pastoral leadership of Br Dimchui Rongmei.

Women's Ministry in Latingkhal

The women of the Latingkhal Moravian Congregation are a vital force in the spiritual life and community outreach of the church. Their ministry is exhortative and multifaceted, encompassing prayer, worship, and compassionate care. They demonstrate strong commitment, contributing significantly to the congregation's growth and mission. In worship, the women's ministry adds a special touch. They lead singing and present new songs on various occasions, enhancing the spirit of worship experience for the entire congregation. Their musical contributions bring a fresh sense of praise, joy and celebration. The women are also at the forefront of the congregation's care ministry. As a group, they visit sick people, offering comfort, support, and prayer during times of illness. This compassionate outreach embodies the church's commitment to caring for its members. Under the broader umbrella of women and children's ministry, Mrs Dimjeng Rongmei plays a crucial role by giving classes to Sunday school children. Her dedication ensures the younger generation is grounded in faith, learning biblical principles in a nurturing environment.

Furthermore, Latingkhal Moravian women actively participate in the wider church community of the Northeast Moravian Church as well with other denominations in the region. They represent the congregation and take part in district women's conferences, district women's fasting prayers, and congregational visits. These activities foster a sense of connection and collaboration with other Moravian Churches and other denominations in the region.

Finally, the women are resourceful in supporting the church financially. They raise funds through the collection of offerings and the sales of traditional dresses. This initiative not only provides financial stability but also celebrates and preserves their cultural heritage. Through their collective efforts, the women of the Latingkhal Moravian Congregation exemplify a powerful and impactful ministry.

A key aspect of their spiritual practice is a separate weekly prayer meeting held every Thursday morning. These gatherings provide a dedicated space for women to come together, share their burdens, and lift one another up in prayer, strengthening their faith and unity.

BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION OF HAFLONG MORAVIAN CHURCH

Haflong Moravian Church was born out of the historical migration of the Moravian members. Some prominent members of the Church moved to Haflong in 1988-1989, and later some followed in the search of livelihood. The fellowship was started by these families in May 1995. Br Gaining Ruangmei was the evangelist appointed by the Moravian Church to serve in Haflong, and it flourished and grew with more people coming to the Moravian family not only from Rongmei Community but some Nepali family too.

Br Khampow now serves as the evangelist to Haflong sharing along with the pastoral ministry of Br Jacob and Sr Suaihiamlu Pamei primarily in Haflong. The stipend for Br Khampow was initially paid from the Moravian Women's fund.

Women's Ministry in Haflong

Haflong Moravian Congregation is blessed with 13 committed women members who actively take part in the spiritual and fellowship life of the church. Each year, Haflong Moravian Women hold their annual meeting, during which resolutions for the year are prayerfully discussed and passed.

For the year 2025, one of the key decisions taken was to organise three fasting and prayer programs. By God's grace, two of these have already been successfully held. At the beginning of the year, the women also organised a home visit and fellowship program, reaching out to the households of the Haflong Moravian Congregation, strengthening bonds of unity and faith.

The women also actively participate in regular congregational programs. Every Tuesday, they join the cottage or house fellowships conducted by the congregation. In addition, Haflong Moravian Women Fellowship meets every Thursday at 4:30 pm (IST), providing a dedicated time of prayer, learning, and mutual encouragement.

Beyond the local congregation, the women remain actively involved in the wider Moravian fellowship. Every year in March-April, Northeast Moravian Women organise a joint visit to the congregations of Latingkhal, Binnakandi, Silchar, and Haflong. These visits include times of fasting and prayer, along with household fellowship with each congregation. These moments of sharing are always deeply enriching, both spiritually and relationally. Furthermore, Haflong Moravian women faithfully take part in the Northeast Moravian Women's Conference, held annually in the second week of October.

In addition to spiritual activities, the women contribute wholeheartedly toward fundraising efforts. Locally, Haflong women raise funds by purchasing vegetables from the Haflong market, reselling them in nearby places, and also by preparing curry for sale. For the District Women's Fund under the Northeast Moravian Women, contributions are raised differently - through collection of members' fees and individual contributions from the women across congregations.

All these activities together reflect the dedication, unity, and service of Haflong Moravian Women. Their efforts not only strengthen their local fellowship but also contribute meaningfully to the wider Moravian community in Northeast India.

Moravian Fellowship Silchar

Moravian fellowship in Silchar started with the vision of Br Kagauchung since the inception of Moravian Church in the Northeast, as it is an important city in Assam and the Northeast connecting people from various states for trade, education, jobs and even healthcare. The vision became a reality in 2023 with the recognition of the Northeast Conference and also with the recognition in 2024 SAMC Synod in Nepal.

The fellowship now has six families under the shared pastoral care of all the ordained pastors and ministers in the Northeast but with Br Jacob Gangmei primarily leading and coordinating the ministry in Silchar. Since the fellowship is in its initial stages there has been very few ministerial activities. However, some younger women in Silchar Moravian Fellowship are volunteering in the ministry of Sunday School for the children. The women have also been actively taking part in the broader ministerial activities under the Northeast women's ministry and have been a significant and immense support to the women's ministry.

'What I Believe'

- Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Br Martin Smith

Br Martin is a retired minister of the United Reformed Church and the Moravian Church. He lives in Ockbrook with his wife Kirsty and is a member there.

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

My father was a Congregational minister, so I was born in a manse on the edge of Leicester. My older sister, Ruth, lives in Brighton and is a chiropractor, horticulturalist and artist. I studied engineering at Leeds University, before training to teach physics at Bath University. Later on, I went to theological college in Oxford. What I hadn't anticipated was that while there I met the love of my life and we were later married in the college chapel. I have two stepsons and four lovely granddaughters.

How and when did you come to faith?

I grew up in a loving Christian family where the reality of God was taken seriously. I spent most of my teenage years unsuccessfully trying to convince God that God did not exist. I made the definite choice of Jesus as my Saviour rather melodramatically, in an evangelistic service while I was a student.

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

It was a long story gradually learning to listen for God's will. I started as a Special Needs teacher for eight years, before working for six years with a Catholic Christian friend in his Home Improvements business in London, and retraining as a plumber and heating engineer. With hindsight these jobs provided me with many valuable experiences and transferable skills for ministry. God was speaking through other people and through an inner conviction. With a certain amount of dread, I realised that God was asking me to test this calling. Then much later, God called me into Moravian ministry, initially through the voice of Br Bob Hopcroft on the phone.

What has been your greatest joy in ministry?

Almost everything (not always all the meetings and administration though). Especially the privilege of being close to people at their most vulnerable: in times of sickness and crisis, and the events surrounding funerals; also, the celebration and tenderness accompanying preparations for weddings and baptisms. It's been a tremendous privilege to be paid for studying and proclaiming the gospel! I love leading bible studies, quiet days and retreats.

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

Only when I was a baby Christian, going through a depressive period and I didn't like myself very much. But I have felt forsaken by God sometimes, but then so did Jesus.

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

I came pretty close to dying when I had a heart attack shortly after starting in ministry at Royton and Salem. I was present both at my father's death in 1980, and my mother's in 1992. Since being ordained I have accompanied a number of people through their last moments in this life and their first encounter with eternity. Jesus said to Martha and Mary, 'I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live, even though they die.' That's good enough for me; I trust him.

What can we learn from other Churches and other faiths?

I once heard a wise man say, 'Some people want to possess God. They try to make God small enough to fit into their containers and they often get hostile and even violent with others whose containers are different shapes and sizes. Some people want to be possessed by God and they realise how enormous is the love of God and how small in comparison is their capacity to receive or understand God's grace. They view others who desire to be possessed by God as fellow seekers after truth, and companions on the journey towards God, who have gifts to give to one another and treasures to share together.' I could not put it better myself and the wise man is an Iranian Shi'ite Muslim cleric.

Do you feel that people are turning their backs on organised religion and if so, why?

Organised religion carries a lot of baggage of privilege and entitlement, the legacies of empire, enslavement, domination, the abuse of power and corruption. But at its heart is Jesus. I don't think people are turning their backs on a thirst for something beyond themselves, for meaning and value, for community, for unconditional love and connection.

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

I've enjoyed Salman Rushdie and Jeanette Winterson, and over the past year I've been reading and rereading David Ford's commentary on John's Gospel. When we lived near Manchester we had season tickets for the Halle Orchestra. I'm a child of the sixties when there were so much brilliant rock, blues, reggae, jazz, folk and prog around. My all-time favourite rock band is Fairport Convention who were formed nearly sixty years ago and still going strong.

The place where you feel closest to God?

There isn't a particular place. Feelings of closeness creep up on you unawares and surprise you. It is often when I am with people I love, or contemplating the wonders of science and nature, or being lost in a good book, work of art or piece of music. But I also feel close to God in suffering, since Jesus died to come alongside us in our pain and our mess.

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

I'm not ready to die just yet, and I haven't decided whether I want to be buried or cremated, but probably in God's Acre somewhere with a simple stone with just name and dates.

Sr Margery Sutcliffe reports from the Autumn Lancashire District Conference

The meeting was held on Zoom on 11th October 2025 and all three churches in the district were represented. Sr Roberta Hoey was the representative for the Provincial Board, and the meeting was chaired by Br Peter Gubi.

Following the opening devotions the minutes were agreed then it was down to business. Under Matters arising Sr Hoey confirmed that IT systems were being updated and this would enable retired ministers to elect to receive future payslips online rather than by post.

Conference was advised that information regarding a Youth Coordinator will be sent to congregations in January; it is envisaged that the role will be part time and will concentrate on the needs of specific regions rather than the whole province, starting with the Lancashire and Yorkshire regions.

Fairfield received the good news that plans to dispose of the open land from the settlement down to the canal are not being pursued. Talks with the scouts with an aim of them taking over the management of the land are progressing.

The full Provincial Board report was circulated prior to the meeting and Sr Hoey went through some of the items for the benefit of the meeting. It was noted that there are no students currently undergoing training for service. A working group is currently looking at ways of supporting ministers, including the best ways to use their individual skills and talents, and to encourage congregations to accept the call to lay preaching and ministry. Sr Hoey further advised that in their pursuit of effective communication the board are compiling a timetable of visits to congregations which it hopes to issue in January.

Sr Hoey was questioned regarding the recent notification of large rent increases at Fairfield. She stated that these were in keeping with commercial rents in the area and that negotiations/queries were being dealt with by Mr Forrester as the correct representative. Fairfield representatives expressed grave concerns that the increases may lead to the loss of working members from church life as some had already stated their intentions to look for alternative accommodation elsewhere. It was noted that the Board reports growing ecumenical engagement in the province, however at present there is no ecumenical engagement in the Lancashire district.

Project 32 - Fairfield reported following a congregation wide survey and discussions, and proposals for improvements were made to the church committee. To date several changes have been implemented including, improved lighting in the vestibule, welcome cards in pews and more information on pictures included in next year's calendar. Triplet sessions have also started where groups of three people meet regularly - in person or via Zoom - for one-hour meetings based around Bible Study. Dukinfield also reported they have made some small changes to their services, whilst Royton reported that to date no changes had been made, but it was hoped that would be rectified now Br Woolford was there.

A district gathering will be hosted by Fairfield on 28th June 2026 at 10.30am.

The dates for next year's meetings were agreed as 7th March 2026 and 10th October 2026.

The meeting closed with the saying of Grace.

Sr Christine Emanuel Reports on the Autumn Eastern District Conference (EDC)

The Eastern District Conference (EDC) was held on Saturday 18th October 2025 at Queen's Park Bedford Moravian Church. Sr Christine Emanuel opened the conference with devotions using the Watchword for the day, followed by a hymn and a prayer.

The five congregations were represented by ministers and deputies. Sr Christine Emanuel was elected as the Chairperson and Sr Minette Flemmings was elected as the Prayer Watch Secretary. Two young people from Harold Road were elected as youth representatives for the Eastern District.

Provincial and Unity Information

Br Michael Newman presented the Provincial Board report and responded to questions asked.

The EDC thanked Brs Edwin Quildan and David Howarth for their work within the district and wish them the best for the future.

Congregation Reports

Bedford - Seven members, three adherents and three children. They have purchased a projector and screen to use in our worship services which the children and adults enjoy actively participating in the service. An open day was held which was well attended by the local children in the area.

Fetter Lane - There are 13 members, with an average attendance of nine adults. They continue to work with the Salvation Army on joint children's events, and they also open the Close very Friday for visitors and to provide refreshments. A display was made for Chelsea in Bloom, and they received a bronze award. A weekly online Bible Study is shared with Hornsey, and includes a course based on the book 'Our Moravian Treasures'.

Harlesden - There are 81 members and five Adherents. Two Sunday school teachers keep the children in many activities in the church including taking part in morning service. There is a weekly Bible Study which takes place on Wednesday and a prayer meeting on Friday at 1.30pm, both held on Zoom. Many members are housebound and receive the Sunday morning service on CD or listen to the service on Zoom.

Harold Road - Membership remains stable at 15 members of which two are young people under eighteen. The young people are very active in the congregation and occasionally lead the Worship service. They have started a prayer group meeting fortnightly at members houses. They have close links with the St Pauls Church that they worship in but are hoping to extend this to other churches in Newham.

Hornsey - The number of members at Hornsey is now 56 and they have had three infant baptisms. Warm Welcome was held during the colder months. They continue to live-stream their services on YouTube and have a weekly online Bible Study which they share with Fetter Lane. A new weekly prayer meeting using WhatsApp was started and this has been well attended.

Updates

There was discussion on how the Youth Grant has been used and will be used in the different congregations. Also, a possible Zoom led discussion is to be organised for young people in the district.

Each congregation shared progress on NCD and Holy Habits. Br Michael Newman gave a talk at the EDC fellowship day in July 2025 and shared further information about how churches could become more Eco-friendly places and as they progress an Eco award could be gained.

The next District Fellowship Day will be held on Saturday 4th July 2026 at Fetter Lane, and the next Autumn EDC meeting will be held on Saturday 17th October 2026 at Fetter Lane.

Everyone was thanked for attending EDC, and it was closed with a hymn and the grace.

EDC then shared lunch together.

Ballinderry Moravian Church, Northern Ireland

Recently most of the pews have been removed from our church building and replaced with chairs. This change has made some new activities possible. Cubs, Beavers and Squirrels now meet regularly with over 50 children attending. In February we held a fun craft evening making cards and decorations for Valentine's Day. We also hosted a very popular Makaton language programme session. A Tai Chi class has been running during the Autumn and two Christmas wreath making workshops are already fully booked. As well as these new activities, existing ones benefit from the extra space. Our community coffee morning on Tuesdays continues to provide a warm, welcoming space for local people to meet and make friends over coffee, scones and shortbread. A well-established book club of around ten enthusiastic readers meets once a month and discussions can be lively!

Our close association with the local residents' association has resulted in some exciting events. Last Christmas we together formed a group of carol singers and sang around the village, finishing up at the church for warm drinks and a singalong. We held a concert to celebrate St Patrick's Day, with two groups of local Irish dancers taking part. Our reconvened carol singing group led the audience in a selection of traditional Irish songs. The evening began with a short introduction to St Patrick provided by Br Jared Stephens and ended with a bowl of Irish stew for everyone. Also in March, a local girl, Lucy Best, won two gold medals and one bronze for skiing at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Italy. Our improved facilities allowed us

© Sr Dorothy McMillan

to host a reception for her, organised by the residents' association. The church was packed to capacity for these events and for many it was their first time inside our building. We hope it won't be their last!

What next for Ballinderry? Recently we began a new series of Bible Studies on Thursday evenings, and we have opened our doors for our popular annual Christmas Fair. We look forward to more Christmas carol singing and, of course, our annual Christingle service. Major renovation work has started on the Manse attached to the church building and we look forward to further improvements to the main church building in due course. As we look back, this year has been one of many changes and God has blessed us with a group of workers with a love for the Ballinderry community. We look forward to what He has in store for us in the future.

Srs Marilyn Marshall and Dorothy McMillan

Hornsey, London

After not meeting since before COVID, our Moravian Women's Association group has started up again. One of the first things they have done is leading one of our morning services in November. It was a service filled with uplifting hymns, readings and an address, along with music from our very own steel band. The service was much appreciated and enjoyed by all, and it was wonderful to see the ladies back together as the MWA. This will have been, without a doubt, the first of many services and events.

As this is being written, we are in the middle of Advent, which we all know is a busy time for the church. Here at Hornsey, we have our usual Christmas services, including the Lessons & Carols service which is combined with the popular Christingle service. Churches Together will also hold their annual community carol singing outside our local Sainsbury's.

We held our annual Christmas Dinner on Sunday 7th December. This was a wonderful occasion where many church members,

© Sr Anne Stennet

along with family and friends came along. As always, we were treated to a tasty array of food which gave everyone the energy they needed for getting onto the dancefloor, with a selection of music played by our very own DJ and some live music from the steel band. A big thank you to everyone involved, for the setting up, the decorating, the music and the food, it was much appreciated by all.

Finally, everyone here at Hornsey would like to wish all of our brothers and sisters a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Sr Claire Newman

© Br Livingstone Thompson

Kilwarlin Moravian Church, Northern Ireland

On what was arguably the wettest night of the year Kilwarlin held a Light Show. A local company had organised to have the trees and grounds lit up. Various points of interest representing the Battle of Thermopylae were accentuated, piped music came from the illuminated church. The effect was just beautiful and somehow the sound of falling rain added to the experience.

Yet again there was torrential rain for our Summer Afternoon Tea Party. Our good friends supported us as usual though profits were down.

Sr Esther Law

Horton, Yorkshire

Christmas came early to Horton this year as we decided that as part of our ongoing outreach and together with our Birthday group, we would hold a Christmas Tree Festival over the weekend of 21st-23rd November. The trees were decorated with different themes from our own church groups, and the local school, community wardens and the local drama society joined in as well, meaning we had lots of new visitors to the Church. We also had a variety of stalls selling seasonal goods and refreshments were served over the weekend. Although the event was slightly early, with Advent not starting until the week after, it had to fit in with lots of other events being held over this very busy period. It was a great success, the trees looked beautiful, the refreshments welcomed and everyone, including passers-by who called in to see what was happening, along with lots of friends and family and the wider church community all came along, and all enjoyed it. A lot of work and a lot of thanks

© Sr Linda Barraclough

to everyone for making it a success, but lots of fellowship, and hopefully something we can continue to do in years to come.

The following week was the start of Advent and Sr Claire hosted an online Advent Bible Study as well as a meeting in church. We also welcomed our Sisters and Brothers from Lower Wyke to a joint service on Advent Sunday and it was wonderful to sing the Hosanna Anthem together and to share this time of worship.

The congregation at Horton hope you have had a peaceful, joy filled Christmas and send very best wishes for the New Year.

Sr Linda Barraclough

© Keith Davies

Leominster, Herefordshire

The Kindle Singers gave us a concert in aid of our organ fund. This fundraising has been ongoing for some years, as the pipe organ needed considerable work to renovate it. Sr Lorraine Shorten set us the goal of organising at least one concert a year, although other fundraising has also helped. The renovation went ahead and was completed recently, sounding magnificent. Some mechanical details remain, but once the organ settles down, organ recitals can be arranged. In the meantime, vocal contributions have gone ahead, including the dedication of the renovated organ on 2nd November by Rev Canon Andrew Mayes at an Evensong. The Harare Singers contributed and all those who had helped the renovation in any way were thanked, including the organist, Rob Milan, who kept the whole project going.

Sr Dilys Howard

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Br Leslie Robinson

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with sadness that we let you know of the death of Br Leslie Robinson.

Leslie was born and baptised at Wellhouse in 1948, and it was there he was ordained a deacon in 1970 before he was called to missionary service in Labrador. He returned to the UK in 1972, and he served Fetter Lane and the Brondesbury society, later Fetter Lane and Harlesden. He returned to Labrador in 1976, working in Makkovik and serving as superintendent. He was consecrated as a presbyter in 1984 in Nain. Leslie later went on to continue his ministry within the United Church of Canada.

He returned recently this year for a visit to the UK and was welcomed in the Eastern District.

We keep Leslie's family in prayer and give thanks for his dedicated service in the Moravian Church and beyond.

Provincial Diary for January

6	Meeting of the Chairs of Provincial Standing Committees	Online
12-13	Provincial Board meeting	Church House
22	Pre-Synod Meeting	Online
22	Pre Synod Meeting	Online
27	CSC Working Group	Online
28 Jan-6 Feb	Unity Women's Desk Consultation	Arusha, Tanzania

Hurricane Melissa Appeal

The British Province is supporting recovery efforts following devastation left by Hurricane Melissa. To donate now, please contact Church House or go to ***www.justgiving.com/campaign/hurricanemelissaappeal***

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Marriages

7th June 2025	Tori Fletcher and Adam Walker	Kilwarlin

Deaths

9th November 2025	John Burkitt	Fairfield

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Racial Justice Sunday 2026

From the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website:

Racial Justice Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday 8 February 2026. This date is part of a shift that moved the observance from September to February, allowing for a more focused reflection on racial justice issues during this time.

We are grateful to Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Churches' Refugee Network (CRN) Chair, for the prayer below for migrants and people seeking asylum.

Loving Father, our hearts cry out to you at the suffering in our world:

We remember and pray for the many around the world who are fleeing from wars, violence, abuse, torture, imprisonment, poverty, famine and climate change. Open our eyes, our ears and our hearts that we may respond with compassion and equity to the cries of those seeking refuge.

Give us the political will in our complex world to work together in creating a world free from abuse, war and violence; a world where we care for those who are most vulnerable; a world where all our resources are shared; a world where we give respect to each other irrespective of colour, culture or creed.

Lord Jesus, help us to remember that you and your earthly family know the experience of seeking refuge and that you travel with those today making perilous journeys to safeguard their lives and that of their families. Give us courage to work for a world in which justice, peace and love become the foundation on which we build together.

Holy Spirit, comfort and heal the brokenness in our world, strengthen and inspire us 'to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.'

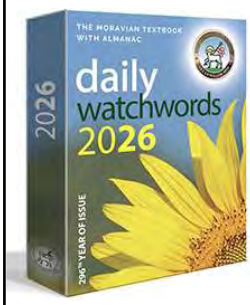
Amen.

Bible Study Notes - Stewardship Biblical Quiz 1

Here are the answers to the quiz published in the last issue of the Moravian Messenger on p.137:

1. B - Humans are to subdue it and have dominion over it.
2. B - Use them to serve others as good stewards of God's grace.
3. B - Investing and multiplying what was given to them.
4. B - Whoever is faithful in little things will also be faithful in much.
5. A - It is the root of all evil.
6. B - By giving the first fruits of all our crops.
7. A - God loves a cheerful giver.
8. C - On earth, where moths and rust destroy.
9. A - Time, money, and compassion.
10. C - Work should be done as though serving the Lord, not people.
11. C - God.
12. C - One who is faithful and wise in managing the household.
13. C - They save and store valuable resources.
14. B - Stewardship is proportional to one's resources.
15. B - They come from God, the Father of lights.
16. B - Those who serve the poor, hungry, and needy are serving Jesus.
17. D - All of the above.
18. B - He will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings.
19. B - They are to be found faithful.
20. A - Faithfulness leads to reward.

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.

New daily email delivery of the Daily Watchword

Since 1731 the Daily Watchwords have been published and are now distributed to thousands of people all over the worldwide Unity. The version we receive in the British Province remains a much loved publication and continues to provide a source of information, through the Almanac, of daily prayers and resources and most importantly a source of inspiration for daily devotions and reflection. As I sit at my desk my Watchword sits at my left hand, ready to be referred to, sometimes for information but daily for my means of prompting a time of reflection. This publication will continue in its current form and there is still an opportunity to order your own copy, or buy one to gift by contacting the Moravian Church House Bookroom.

When I attend meetings and pastoral visits I usually take my Watchword with me as it can form the basis for an opening devotion or inspiration for conversation and reflection. Sadly sometimes I forget to take it and I have often wished there was an App or something similar which would make it accessible while on the move.

We live in an increasingly digitally heavy world and whilst I still love the feeling of a book, the convenience of having something which is so regularly referred to within easy reach, on my mobile phone, tablet or laptop still appeals.

Well the wait is over and this January we launch on the Moravian website an opportunity to subscribe for free to a daily email delivery of the Daily Watchword, arriving during the morning each day. It will offer the set readings for the day alongside the Old Testament Text and the Doctrinal Text (hymn verses and quotes will not appear due to copyright reasons). We hope that this will prove to be of interest to many people including those who may not have access to a physical copy or who might find a digital version useful.

Head over to the website to the Watchword page and subscribe. ***https://www.moravian.org.uk/daily-watchwords/what-are-the-daily-watchwords***

Sr Jane Carter
Provincial Board

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