

MWA HOME AND OVERSEAS PAPER DECEMBER/JANUARY 22-23

Some of you may have heard the words “Holy Habits” mentioned in your congregations along with a request for someone to be a co-ordinator for the congregation. “Holy Habits” is part of Project 32 which begins this year, 2022, and will last until 2032. It has been designated as a decade of evangelism and church growth.

I’m not sure that many of you know what “Holy Habits” is and so I have asked Br Philip Cooper, who first brought “Holy Habits” to the Mission and Society Committee to write something about it.

What is it and where has it come from?

Holy Habits is a set of resources for churches, which has been published by the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), which was first developed by the Birmingham Methodist Circuit. It grew out of a study of Acts 2:42-47, by the Methodist minister, Andrew Roberts. Acts 2:42-27 gives us the earliest description of the Christian church. The resources identify ten aspects of the church in that Biblical passage, which are referred to as, “Holy Habits.”

These habits are: Biblical Teaching, Serving, Fellowship, Eating Together, Breaking Bread (Holy Communion), Gladness & Generosity, Prayer, Worship, Sharing Resources and Making More Disciples. The idea is that churches/congregations reflect upon these Holy Habits, one at a time, over of designated period of time.

What do the resources contain?

The basic material for this set of resources includes an introductory booklet to Holy Habits and one book for each of the Holy Habits. The book for each habit contains a selection of Bible readings, prayers, hymns, and suggestions of works of art, books and films that can be used in worship services, prayer groups and study groups. Each book, also, contains sermon ideas and suggestions for how a congregation may put these habits into practice. This means that the material can easily be adapted to suit a particular congregation’s situation.

Why Holy Habits?

It is 500 years since the Moravian Church was renewed at Herrnhut, in 1722. Ten years later, in 1732, the Moravian community commissioned its first missionaries to go and share the Gospel with the enslaved people of the West Indies. Halfway through this decade on 13th August 1727, an important event took place at Herrnhut known now as “The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit.” This has been described by Moravian Church historians as a second Pentecost or a spiritual awakening. Following this event, certain developments took place within the community, many of which correspond to the “Holy Habits.” These developments in the community are described in the following paragraph and the “Holy Habits” they relate to are in brackets and italics.

After a period of division, the members of the Herrnhut community came together for a service of worship and Holy Communion (*Worship and Breaking Bread*). People felt the Holy Spirit powerfully present, bitter feelings were washed away and people felt a deep sense of unity (*Fellowship*). Following this experience, Lovefeasts began (*Fellowship, Eating Together*), the Daily Texts or Watchwords commenced (*Biblical Teaching*), the

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Prayer Watch was started (*Prayer*) and, five years later, the Herrnhut community sent its first missionaries out to share the Gospel with people who had never had the chance to hear it (*Making More Disciples*).

Why now?

The Project 32 Committee and the Provincial Board hope that our congregations in the British Province will embrace this initiative, as part of Project 32. Hopefully, just as that Holy Communion Service, in Herrnhut, on 13th August, 1727, can be seen as the spring board for the evangelism and church growth that followed so, Holy Habits will help provide the spring board for such growth within the British Province today.

What can we do?

I do hope that some MWA members will agree to help co-ordinate "Holy Habits" in their congregations. I also hope that all of you will see this as an opportunity to deepen your faith and understanding of what God is asking of us today.

Sr Janet Cooper