

MWA Home and Overseas Paper - June 2024

Education – but not for all

Are you reading this? If so, then you have been taught to read. Not everyone can. As a student I worked in a Working Men's Club. Every lunchtime a friendly chap came in, stood at the bar and pulled the newspaper towards himself. Then he would chat to folk about the news that day and by the end of lunch he may even be drawing someone's attention to a particular story. The amazing fact was he could not read. He was bright, friendly and could retain information. Just imagine what he may have achieved if he could have read.

Today it is reported that about 7% of UK children are 'severely absent' from school, a huge increase of 134% since before the pandemic. A fact that should concern each of us and hopefully we can find ways of encouraging children and young people to return to education.

UNICEF tell us that worldwide 130 million girls are out of school – that is 13% of all girls worldwide. So, 130 million girls set up for a life of poverty and possibly early marriage. Without education girls are frequently unable to play a full role in their community and society, so perpetuating male domination.

For centuries the Moravian Church worldwide has placed a great emphasis upon education for all.

Br John McOwat describes one example of the educational work in his book titled 'India and Nepal': 'For Moravians world-wide, education is vitally important. In India and Nepal, children of a range of religions were welcomed and often provided with a free education. This was so appreciated by people of other faiths who regarded this as a great gift. Hence, they often gave gifts of great value in return. The Matho Moravian School, in Ladakh high in the mountains, was given the priceless gift of a piece of land with water, by local Buddhist monks. Hence in 1997 this enabled the school to open, taking forward work begun the previous year.'

The MWA donation to Binnikandi School in Assam continues our support to education worldwide. This donation will go towards a new school bus to support outreach work.

All Moravian schools are based upon principles developed by Jan Amos Comenius (1692-1670). He was headmaster of the school at Fulnek in Moravia and his work has influenced teaching methods in all Moravian schools & beyond. His work is still celebrated in the Czech Republic and beyond. His educational principles included: curiosity should be encouraged; schools should be cheerful & interesting places; children should be encouraged to learn through their senses.

While reflecting upon the importance of education for all, why not think about your favourite book that you read as a child, or that you have read with a child recently?

Sr Mary Holmes