

MWA Home and Overseas Paper- May 2024

Sisters Connecting

Across the globe during May Moravian women will be celebrating our connections at Sisters' Festivals. Count Zinzendorf established the first Choirs¹ as support and social groups; this later led to Anna Nitschmann organising the first Single Sisters' Festival in May 1744.

Since then the Sisters' choirs have amalgamated and we now celebrate the one Sisters' Festival. Still, it is an important opportunity to celebrate our connections and be thankful for the fellowship and support offered by Sisters both locally and across the globe.

I became a Sister in 2017, at Fulneck Church in Yorkshire, brought into the Church by Br Michael Newman; so I think of myself as quite a 'newbie'. Thanks to my parents and grandmother, from early in my childhood I was passionate about fairness, equality and human rights; this probably explains my comfort with the Moravian Church and the topics that I will frequently weave into the H&Os papers.

Connecting and supporting each other, either face-to-face or by using technology, is important; we can appreciate this by looking at the negative impact of loneliness upon physical and mental health. Since becoming a Moravian and joining the MWA I have met people from across the UK at various events. Zoom services from across our worldwide churches have introduced me to prayers in languages that I had never heard before. I have also had the opportunity to learn about the work of the Church in hospitals and schools around the world: here are a couple of examples.

Sikonge Moravian Mission Hospital in Western Tanzania has just celebrated its centenary. It now has new medical, surgical and children's wards, plus an excellent relatively new physiotherapy department. Their goal is: 'as a Mission Hospital we want to offer treatment and medicine to every single person in need. No one in need of treatment should leave Sikonge Mission Hospital without getting help due to the lack of ability to pay'.

We can look to Ladakh, high in the mountains of India, for an example of a school established by the Moravians to provide free education to children of all religions. The approach of the Moravians was so appreciated that the Buddhist monks gave them some valuable land free to create a school building.

More about me: I love the theatre and one of my favourite films is 'Sister Act'. Is it a film you remember watching? Although made in the 1990s it is still a go-to film for me if I want to relax and have a laugh. No spoilers here but ... a cabaret singer ends up in witness support, having witnessed a murder, and is placed in a downtown failing convent. The Mother Superior puts her in charge of the choir. The result amazes everyone and the Pope pops by for a visit to hear them sing - well, it is a feel-good film!

¹ Choir (German *Chor* simply means group, not just singing choirs).

For me, the takeaway messages are: NO to murder; NO to getting mixed up in witness support (if at all possible); YES to revitalising our church communities and to singing joyfully. As many of you know, singing is good for us in so many ways; if you were at the recent MWA Away Day you will have shared in some roof-raising singing.

Having read this, I hope that you are encouraged to watch the film. Also, reflect upon how you connect with Sisters both in the UK and around the world, and enjoy a good sing next time you have the opportunity.

Sr Mary Holmes