

### Come Journey with Me

As I write this final paper on our theme “Come journey with me” we are well into the holiday period. Many of us will be preparing to go on journeys – some to sunny climes, some to visit family or friends – venturing to new and exciting places or returning to familiar, well loved areas. Wherever we go there is the inevitable question of what to take with us. How much will fit in our suitcase? Usually we return not having used half of what we took! As Sr Wendy wrote in the May paper her parents and our missionaries of the past took with them very little indeed “Nought in their hand they took save the love of God and the Holy Book” (Samuel King Hutton).

One thing I always take with me, whether away from home for a long or short time, is the Moravian Text Book. I don't have as strong a faith as those before me but I pop it in my suitcase “just in case” as my mother used to say. In case of what I'm not sure but it gives me that little extra courage when travelling alone and makes me feel closer to God and my Moravian brothers and sisters. God was along side all the great figures we read about in the Bible, constantly with them on their life's journey of faith. They had no text book but had a strong and close relationship with him trusting that he would never leave them especially when they needed him most. Who would have thought Jonah would have been safe inside the whale or Daniel in the lion's den?

A recent missionary, Gladys Aylward was born in London in 1904. During her teenage years she felt a strong calling to work as a missionary in China and having heard of Mrs Lawson, an older lady already working there, she made the long and arduous journey to Yangchen near Beijing. Together the two women opened an Inn that offered an over night stop, food and rest to the passing mule caravans, thus gaining the trust of the travellers who had seen very few Europeans before. Gladys told stories about Jesus and so her missionary work really began. She continued to receive the trust of the Chinese government travelling throughout the country on their behalf enforcing the law against “foot binding” young girls, advocating prison reform and risking her life many times to help those in need. When in 1938 the region was invaded by Japanese forces Gladys made the epic 12 day journey over the mountains with 100 children. Despite being wounded herself, she cared for the children and kept them safe during which time many were converted to Christianity. Having delivered the children into competent hands in Sian she collapsed with typhus fever but when her health returned she continued her work starting a church in Sian and a settlement for lepers in Szechuan, near the borders of Tibet. She returned to England in 1947 and continued preaching. She died in 1970. Some of you will remember that Alan Burgess wrote a book about her entitled “The small Woman” which was made into a film starring Ingrid Bergman called “The Inn of the Sixth Happiness”.

Jesus calls us to Journey with him today and in doing so we trust that his constant love and care will accompany us day by day. As with any successful relationship mutual values are vital and He also must be able to trust **us** to continue his work in 2017. As we journey with God and with each other we pray that together we can make his light shine through the darkness and make a difference in our small corner of the world.

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