

## Moravian Women's Association

Devotional Paper

May 2017

### Come, Journey with Me

For most of us today the invitation to answer a call and to journey with Christ is interpreted in a spiritual sense. The days when it meant, as it did to the disciples, to uproot yourself and put your trust in God as you travel into the unknown are almost completely in the past.

Almost twenty years ago my mother referred to the early stories about the early Moravian missionaries written about by Samuel King Hutton in his book of 1935, titled **By Patience and The Word**, in which there was a quotation which read "Nought in their heart or hand they took, save love of God and the Holy Book".

Ten years after this book was written, she and my father answered a call and set off on their own journey of faith to the Caribbean. No vaccinations, no furniture vans, very little clothing and certainly no money. This was 1945 and the aftermath of the Second World War, travelling by oil tanker (my father, going on ahead) and cargo boat (my mother, very sea sick). By the time my mother arrived and eventually was taken to see her husband (only still newly married), he was desperately ill with typhoid and not expected to live. Within a very short time she too was ill and joined him in the neighbouring bed, only weighing 10 stone between them when they were able to leave the nursing home. This was her introduction to life as a missionary wife.

But they both did slowly recover, being nursed back to health by the Gubi family who took them in, despite their own troubles. After this terrible beginning, their ministry journey continued, often beset by recurring illnesses and trials (a mission house with no floor, no water and no electricity), and at times relying on congregation members for gifts of food. So much was a steep learning curve for a couple recovering health and strength, but still never faltering in their faith.

A few years later, being forced to return to England critically ill and with no replacement available for my father who therefore had to stay behind, I accompanied her as a small toddler and had to be fostered out with relatives for the months that she was hospitalised, during which time my sister was also born very prematurely and taken by my grandmother, even though she was caring for my grandfather who was bedridden following a stroke. This was again a difficult period for us all. Once again she was nursed back to health and we were eventually briefly reunited as a family before further separations as my father was recalled to the Caribbean. Their journey followed a succession of calls until my father's ill health ended his ministry in Belfast. This was a particularly testing time for my mother, through nursing him whilst also caring for her own mother who came to live with us following a severe stroke and with a young daughter still at school and taking GCSEs. Then, still grieving for my father, having to immediately once more pack up all their belongings and travel back to England to find another place to live.

She admitted that there were times (such as the time when the ceiling of the house collapsed on top of them) when she thought God might be testing her and she questioned the direction of her own journey.

But amongst the books and papers my father left for her were the following words:

‘If I should die and leave you here awhile,  
Be not like others sore undone, who keep  
Lone vigils by the silent dust and weep –  
For my sake – turn again to life and smile  
Nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do  
Something to comfort weaker hearts than thine –  
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine  
And I, perchance may therein comfort you.’

These words were with her as she took up her own call to the ministry, as she felt my father had wanted her to do, and continued her journey of faith; learning to drive (eventually!), returning to college to study, whilst nursing my grandmother through her last difficult days and then, eventually, responding to new calls of her own.

In her own words before she became ill:

“I am satisfied in the knowledge that the Lord has always had me in his care and keeping, and will continue to guide and use me. My heart will remain in all the places in which we served, either together or singly, with all the memories that are now treasures of life dedicated to the Lord whom I tried to serve.”

I am sure you will appreciate that this has been a difficult paper to write, though it is now a full year since her death, but a life so lived leaves a lasting legacy of love, faith and commitment to the Lord that we feel deeply is worth sharing.

Wendy Hopcroft

#### For Discussion:

When you read the words ‘Come journey with me’ how do you interpret them? Do you feel Christ is inviting YOU to come WITH HIM, wherever he leads? Or are YOU asking HIM to come WITH YOU? Is there a difference between the two?

Do you think the days of taking up the call to *physically* journey are in the past? Are we still a missionary church?