



APRIL 2026



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Easter in Salem

Holy Week is a very busy and very beautiful time for Moravians in North Carolina. In addition to the readings for Holy Week each evening, Home Church has a communion service on Thursday, a crucifixion service at 2:15pm on Good Friday, a lovefeast Friday evening, and a Great Sabbath concert on Saturday evening. Each service is beautiful and deeply touching, and they help us prepare for Easter morning.

When my wife and I were living in Pennsylvania, every year we would drive 500 miles to share in the services in Salem, especially the lovefeast and sunrise service. The lovefeast begins with the gospel narrative of Jesus' burial and the hymns give words to our grief, but gradually the hymns become songs of joy as we look toward the promise of heaven and the assurance that God will wipe away all tears.

On Easter Sunday, over five thousand people gather in Salem Square in the pre-dawn gloom. Some are babies bundled up in strollers, while some of the older folks are clutching their walkers. Julie and I always brought our children to the service when they were young. I remember holding a sleeping child with her head on my shoulder. We greet friends who always stand in the same spot even though we can barely see them by the light of the nearly full moon.

Since the 1940s the sunrise service in Salem has been broadcast in various forms, including on the Armed Forces Radio. Today it is livestreamed with narration before the service and when the liturgy is paused. Many people who have moved away or are no longer able to attend join us in a virtual community. When our youngest daughter was away at university, she would sit in a cemetery near her dormitory and watch the service.

We rub the sleep from our eyes as we listen to the birdsong and enjoy peaceful meditation. Thousands of people from many different churches gather outside the church. Everyone is truly welcome. Some are wearing 'church clothes'; some are in blue jeans and puffy coats. Some of them were not prepared for the cold. Some people in the crowd, like my wife and I, have been coming to Salem for decades, but for others it is their first time. This crowd is so different from other crowds. They are not waiting to see a celebrity or to dance and shout. The crowd quietly waits for the pastor to step out and proclaim that 'The Lord is Risen!' We respond, 'The Lord is risen indeed'. And then we profess our faith - not as Moravians alone but together as Christians.

Partway through the liturgy we make a slow procession to God's Acre. Family members and volunteers cleaned the stones and

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Holding out for spring, we can't let winter win

It's been a long winter, or so it seems to me: rain and more rain. The weather has been almost as dismal as the news. I cannot comprehend the words coming out of the US administration about the war on Iran - the Secretary of War said that the US would 'keep advancing, no quarter, no mercy for our enemies'. A terrible statement making war crimes sound like video games. Along with the continuing war in Ukraine caused by the invasion of the Russian army; suffering in Gaza and the West Bank; let alone other conflicts in the world; the rising cost of living and environmental degradation ... Sadly, most of the dismal news has been caused by humanity itself with the endless pursuit of power and gain.

It has been a long winter, but we must hold out for spring, and we can't let winter win, to quote Ed Sheeran. It may not be a phrase from the Bible, but it reflects very well the hope we claim at Easter as we worship a risen Saviour. Jesus was born into a world of cruelty and desperation, but his whole life exemplifies a rejection of those values. His parents knew obedience to God's call, the reality of life as a refugee and living as a working family with no silver spoon to cushion them. Jesus himself reached out to the most vulnerable in society bringing healing and acceptance. He challenged the religious structures and taught of the love of God, forgiveness for those broken men and women who desire it and the abundance of the kingdom of God for all.

Such a challenge to the Powers That Be could not be allowed so darkness fell, betrayal followed and a quasi-judicial process

began. Political expediency manipulated the crowd and popular sentiment bayed for blood. The result was religious institutions and a powerful regime collaborating to rid the city of the one who by his life challenged their power. It was the death of an innocent man in one of the cruellest manners possible. It was winter alright!

But spring came, unexpectedly at the dawn when no one was looking and all hope was gone. The resurrection of Jesus from death in a tomb occurred in a garden before daylight. He who had been dead was alive again. Hope rose again as God raised Jesus to everlasting life.

Christian hope is very powerful, but it can be easily misunderstood. It is not a matter of passively hoping for the best and doing nothing as if God will magically wipe away all human wrong. It is instead a belief that God calls us to partner with him in working for the values of his kingdom. It is shown most vividly in his beloved son Jesus who lived and died to show us a better way and who rose again proving that ultimately life, love and forgiveness are the most powerful forces in this and any world.

Frost fades slowly, but hold out for spring, don't let winter win.

With every blessing for a hope filled Easter.

Sr Sarah Groves
Editorial Team



Letters to Editorial Team

Dear Editors,

From the Guardian newspaper I bought Ingrid Robeyn's Research and Philosophy work published last year (2025) titled 'The Case Against Extreme Wealth'.

It's a work not about wealth but it's extremes. As a socialist Christian, I found it fascinating as if it were a Christian thesis. She has put in reference book form the basics of what my socialism tells me, which is Christian based.

I have bought nine copies, kept my own and given the others to administrative and spiritual leaders believing they all are products of academia and therefore, 'thinkers'. I have asked all recipients to read their gift and then please pass it on to others, thought to be thinkers and so on. I could not afford to buy more. However, I am asking Penguin if I may reproduce a few relevant Christian orientated parts in our monthly journal and if there is interest, we may have a brief discourse, re. Limitarianism and then, as I do, see the work as a modern Moravian Church pathway to our Provinces future?

Yours for Christs sake, **Br Alan Holdsworth.**

Sr Groves writes:

I have been sent a copy of this book by Br Holdsworth and look forward to reading it. The basic premise is that there should be an upper limit on the accumulation of wealth. It is an argument I am sympathetic to and am interested to find out how it might be achieved.

Dear Editors,

Having been born and bred in Fulneck I remember very well, when aged ten, the flurry of activity took place around Fulneck during the special Synod of 1957, as referred to by Sr Mary Holmes in the March issue of the Messenger entitled 'Make the beds - Synod is coming'.

At the time, I was the proud possessor of a new autograph book and managed to get the autographs of two of the brethren: Karel Reichel and Radim Kalfus, portrayed in the photograph which accompanied her article. I remember when Br Kalfus was puzzled by the slogan on the passing local coal-lorry - 'Wood for Coal' - thinking it might be some strange kind of local exchange until it was pointed out to him that 'Wood' was simply the man's name and 'Coal' was what he was selling.

I also got the autographs of the brethren Elyiah Tsetan Phuntsog and Jonathan Paljor, both from 'Tibet' as we called it then. I obtained a signature from Br Teofilo Kisanji of Tanganyika, who as a bishop was later to ordain me in Tabora, just thirteen years afterwards. It was only Dr Keevill who first hesitated when asked for his autograph, smilingly stating that he was 'not Len Hutton': world-famous cricketer at the time who was also from Fulneck. Our eldest child, Jane was born just fifteen years later at the Mission Hospital Br Keevill had founded at Sikonge many decades previously.

Regrettably this autograph book was lost years later somehow in the rough and tumble of family life and the numerous moves inevitably involved in forty-two years of Moravian ministry, but the characters involved have left an indelible mark on my life all the same. The thundering tones of 'Come let us all with gladness raise' as sung at Fulneck with gusto on that memorable occasion, still resonate with me down the years and the final verse amply sums it all up - 'He gave us faithful men to lead and help us in our time of need. But Lord all power is thine alone and thou the work must carry on.'

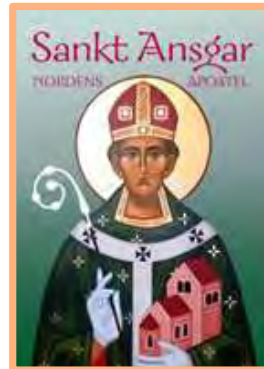
Br Richard Ingham, Fairfield

Ansgar, the apostle of the North



King Harald Bluetooth's runestone, pictured in Danish passports

2026 marks the 1200th anniversary of Christianity in Denmark. In the year 826 a Benedictine monk named Ansgar reached Denmark. The transition to Christianity took more than a century and is marked by King Harald I Bluetooth's runestone in Jelling from around the year 965. It is written here that he converted the Danes to Christianity.



In Denmark the Viking Age lasted from the late part of the Iron Age from around 800 to the middle of the 11th century. The oldest Danish mention of 'Denmark' is found on the large Jelling runestone.

Ansgar (801-865) is known as the one who brought Christianity to Denmark and Sweden. He was born in Amiens in France in 801. Ansgar was admitted to the monastery school in Corbie in Northern France, where he was raised for the monastic life.

At the age of 22, Ansgar was sent to the monastery of New Corvey in Lower Saxony. Three years later, he was sent to the North. The Nordic countries were practically the only area where Christianity had not yet been preached in the then known world. The goal was for the gospel to reach the whole known world. But the North was missing. However, there were probably also more political reasons for bringing the church to the North.

The Vikings' society was cruel. The sense of honour was great, not showing emotions and losing reputation was important. Women who engaged in fornication would be sold as slaves. Slavery was extremely widespread. Flamboyant Nordic chieftains were known for their readiness for violence and almost pathological sense of honour. Loyalty to the lineage and oath to the king and ancestors were also characteristic of society. It is estimated that Denmark had a potential force of around 100,000 warriors.

The Vikings traveled incredibly far during the Viking Age, spreading from the Americas in the west to Central Asia in the east. They reached Newfoundland in Canada, sailed across the Atlantic,

plundered and traded along the coasts of Europe, and sailed along the Russian rivers to the Black and Caspian Seas to trade with Constantinople and Baghdad. Magnificent graves of noblemen have been found with riding equipment, swords, axes, shields and decapitated slaves who were to serve their masters in the afterlife.

In 826, the Danish King Harald Klak (785-852) met with Louis the Pious (778-840) in Ingelheim. Harald Klak needed political support in his fight to gain sole control over the Danes. The result of their meeting was that Harald was baptised with his entire family. The abbot of the monastery of New Corvey was now asked if Ansgar could be released from his duties there and join him to Denmark. The abbot recommended this and Ansgar saw this task as the fulfillment of his life's goal.

We do not know much about Ansgar's efforts during the first three years in Denmark. They were probably fruitless, not least because of King Harald Klak's great problems in establishing his kingship. Some Swedish nobles wanted Emperor Louis to preach Christianity in Sweden. Ansgar was called home to the imperial court in Ingelheim and presented with the request, to which he agreed without hesitation. Ansgar understood the journey to Sweden as a call from God and as an act of penance.



The journey was dangerous. The ship that the emperor had equipped for the journey was attacked. It was impossible to save the ship, and Ansgar lost his liturgical books and other belongings. Finally, Ansgar and his small retinue reached the Swedes' religious and political center, Birka, on foot. Here, Ansgar's work was hampered by power struggles and direct opposition to his preaching. But there were also those who listened - not least the Swedish king.

Ansgar now traveled back to Emperor Louis with letters from the Swedish king. And to strengthen the mission in the North, Emperor Louis decided to establish a special archbishopric in Hamburg with the North as its territory.

As archbishop of Hamburg, Ansgar traveled back to both Danes and Swedes. The Danish King Hårik gave him permission to preach, and Ansgar became the king's confidant. However, he failed to convert Hårik, but Ansgar was allowed to build a church in the Schleswig town of Hedeby (which at that time belonged to the Danish kingdom) around the year 848.

Ansgar was also called to Sweden in a dream. He arrived in Birka. Here he participated in a meeting of the assembly, where it was discussed whether Christianity should be introduced. The result was that Ansgar was now given permission to build a church. A priest was hired to hold services for the Christian merchants there. After these travels, Ansgar died in Hamburg in the year 865. Ansgar was known as a holy man who gave himself to the mission that God had given him.

The 1200th anniversary of the arrival of Ansgar is being commemorated and celebrated in 2026 in Denmark. Together with representatives from several Church Communion, members of the Christiansfeld Moravian Church took part in an ecumenical celebration in Haderslev Catholic Church and in the Lutheran Cathedral. It was a historic day that reminded us that even though we belong to different church denominations, we were united in celebrating the coming of the gospel to Denmark 1200 years ago.

Br Jørgen Bøytler
Minister of Christiansfeld Moravian Church

Editors' note: the Jelling Rune Stones are not far from Christiansfeld.



Easter in Salem (Continued from front page)

© Br Craig Atwood



to awaken people. They also get to enjoy a large ham and egg breakfast before they take their places. Some of the people have been playing in the band for over 60 years.

The bands process and gradually assemble on a grassy area in the middle of the cemetery. The music swells and then we resume our confession of faith as the sky grows pink and purple and gold. We face the sun as it rises and dispels the gloom. We feel its rays warming our faces and its light illuminating our world. We are truly blessed.

Most years, my family also goes to the small Moravian Church where I was raised to join them on their God's Acre. Their 'sunrise' service is at 10:00am so the band can also play in Salem. It is a little different to gather after the sun has risen, but the liturgy is just as beautiful.

We stand by the gravestones of my daughter, sister, mother, and father and remember the days when we used to stand beside them. The ties that bind us are strongest at Easter. We rejoice that love is stronger than death.

Br Craig Atwood
Associate Pastor at Home
Moravian Church



put flowers on all the graves. It takes a long time because there are typically over five thousand people processing. While walking, we listen to the band play chorales antiphonally. One band plays a line and another answers. The 400-member band is divided into several smaller groups so that the procession is surrounded by music. There is something deeply touching about music wafting over the dewy hills of the God's Acre. Most of the band members have been up since 2:00am making rounds

The Moravian Diaspora

At the end of last year, I was invited by the Provincial Board to take on the role of Diaspora Secretary for the Moravian Church, due to the sudden and sad death of Sr Lindsey Newens who was my predecessor in this post. Naturally the Province needed someone to continue this work, and I was privileged and excited to take on this important role.

Having studied in Liverpool for three years for an art and textile degree, I know firsthand how difficult it can be living far away from a Moravian Congregation. During that time, I was blessed to be able to attend Moravian Youth weekends in England and Northern Ireland as well as a Moravian held at the Fulneck Settlement. Now and again, I would travel to attend Fairfield and Dukinfield congregations and when home for holidays I would return to my home Church, Wellhouse, Mirfield in Yorkshire.

When you look back at the history of the Moravian Church the Moravian Diaspora refers to the 18th century expansion of the renewed Moravian Church from Herrnhut in Saxony. Herrnhut was established in 1722 from refugees fleeing

persecution in Moravia and Bohemia. Under Count Zinzendorf this movement focused on establishing small Diaspora societies within existing European Churches to revitalise spiritual life in Europe while launching a pioneering global missionary movement.

Today the Moravian Church in the British Province focuses on a slightly different version of Diaspora work. This entails linking Moravians who no longer live near Moravian Churches but still value a connection with the Church. They miss the traditions of things such as our Lovefeast our hymns and liturgies, our worship style and our warm fellowship. So the Diaspora group exists for past members and friends who have moved away from their congregations due to studying, work or have relocated to be nearer family.

Some say 'once a Moravian always a Moravian', because our members are proud of our denomination's history, practises and spirituality. There are approximately 120 existing members of our Moravian Diaspora. Hopefully through The Gathered Stream Zoom

services and Bible Study we can connect more and reach out to our Moravian Diaspora. This is in addition to keeping them in touch with news, developments and changes within the British Province and across the worldwide Moravian unity.

We are always looking for new folk to join the Diaspora so please get in touch with me if you, friends or family members would appreciate being a member of the Diaspora family. I am hoping to send out newsletters every three months, and we have ideas of holding physical services where there is a large cluster of Diaspora members, so that they feel more supported and connected to the Province. The Diaspora is an important group of people who should feel regularly connected to the rest of the Moravian Church in the British province and should be valued and not forgotten.

God bless.

Sr Patsy Holdsworth
patsy.holdsworth
@moravian.org.uk



Sr Roberta Thompson, Mayoress Allison Minford and Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Jackson Minford, and Br John Costley

© Sr Amy Baird

Moravians in Conflict

Archives Exhibition in Gracehill 28th February

One of the most unique things about the Moravian Church is its proficiency in keeping comprehensive records. Since the founding of the Gracehill Moravian settlement in 1759, ministers have kept diaries, congregation meetings have been recorded and birth, death and marriage records meticulously preserved. This custom of the Moravian Church makes it a treasure trove for professional researchers and family historians alike.

For the past few years, the Moravian Archives of Ireland, based in Gracehill, have endeavoured to run an exhibition in the first few months of the year, showing some of these incredible records, and artefacts that have been collected over the course of the settlement's history. This year, the theme of 'Moravians in Conflict situations,' was chosen and the planning began.

The exhibition sought to highlight the role of Moravians in situations of conflict since they arrived on the island of Ireland in the 18th century. Visitors were informed about the history of these events, from the United Irishmen rebellion of the 1798 to modern conflict and everything in between. There were knowledgeable guides at each station speaking to guests and making the experience more personal.

The success of the day was indicated on the previous evening with a talk by Lorraine Parsons, of the British Provincial Archivist which attracted almost 50 listeners. She shared instances of wider British Moravian involvement in the First World War, highlighting *Moravian Messenger* articles from the time as a mine of information for understanding the conflict and the role that Moravians played in it.

The day of the exhibition began with a display on the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798. Gracehill has a special connection to this event as it is well known in the local area, and recorded on the minister's diary from the time, that the village was a sanctuary to both sides during the conflict. The rebellion was the subject of a talk given on the day by Alistair Donaghy, a local guide and Stephen McCracken, a guide and writer who can trace his family's involvement in the conflict.

There was also a great focus on the world wars with an effort made to commemorate Moravians who served and gave their lives. Drawing a lot of attention in this section of the exhibition were physical artifacts including replica pistols and genuine World War I helmets and weapons. These helped bring to life the stories that were on display. Members of Gracehill who served in World War I are commemorated on a plaque in the Church. This plaque, the people on it and the history behind it, were the focus of another fascinating talk given on the day by Andrew Gamble. The contributions of other service people from the area were also highlighted. Information from University

Road Moravian Church, Belfast drew attention to the role Kay Adams, who served in World War II as a precision Instrument Repairer in the WAAF. Both the talks that punctuated the exhibition, as well as the one on the preceding day were very well attended, and feedback could only be described as glowing.

Overall, it's fair to say that archivist Jackie Neill along with the rest of the archivists and organisers of this event couldn't have been happier with the results. The turnout was greater than in previous years, with attendees including local historians, politicians and writers, as well as a large group of History students from Queen's University Belfast.



Alistair Donaghy, Andrew Gamble, Sr Jackie Neill and Stephen McCracken

© Sr Sarah Groves

The event was also attended by many members of Gracehill Church and residents of the village, whose unfailing support in preserving and sharing the history of the village, whether on World Heritage Day or events such as this, is the most encouraging of all. Our warmest thanks to everyone who contributed to the exhibition and our wonderful caterers who kept us fed and watered over the weekend. What was achieved on the day in terms of numbers and reception was admirable. However, I'm sure all the archivists who participated in this event would agree that the connections made and strengthened during the months of preparation were just as rewarding and encouraging as the event itself.

While the Gracehill Moravian Archives hold the title 'Moravian Archives of Ireland' this was a truly collaborative endeavour, with tireless work from archivists in Cliftonville, Ballinderry and University Road Churches being invaluable. They are so enthusiastic about the work they are doing, all helping each other and sharing valuable knowledge and insights. That passion and teamwork is what makes events like this achievable and speaks to the spirit and ethos of the Moravian community.

Sr Amy Baird
Gracehill



Could you serve on a Provincial Standing Committee?

At our Provincial Synod in July, elections will be held for all the Standing Committees of the Province. The committees have shared some information for people with an interest in the work of the committees to stand for election, five of which are listed below, and others to follow in the next issue. Please contact the committees or the Provincial Board if you would like to know further details about their work.

Archive and Heritage Committee

As a member of the Archive and Heritage Committee, you will be helping to safeguard the future of your Church by supporting the care of its records, buildings, and stories. This work ensures that the Church's identity continues in the years ahead.

The committee is not only for historians or heritage specialists. Many of the skills it relies on will already be familiar to you, especially if you have ever served on a congregation committee, arranged an event, managed paperwork, applied for funding, or simply taken part in any church activity.

In practical terms, the committee supports congregations who have questions about their records, historic objects, and buildings. This includes advising on storage, care, repairs, and long-term maintenance. Members need not be expected to carry out archival work themselves; instead, they help identify good practice, spot funding opportunities, support research, and work closely with the Provincial Archivist to ensure consistent and sensible approaches across the Province.

Our recent work has involved advising on record care, supporting heritage projects, and contributing to discussions about the long-term future of church buildings and collections. Looking ahead, the committee aims to ensure that care for records, artefacts, and buildings is considered early, rather than as an afterthought, as once stories, records, or buildings are lost, they cannot be replaced.

The committee meets a few times a year, mainly online. Members come from different parts of the Province and are usually active within their own congregations or settlements. A mix of ages and perspectives would be especially

welcome. Skills including organisation, clear communication, and basic confidence with computers are useful, but not essential. What matters most is reliability, good judgement, and a willingness to work with others. Curiosity and common sense are as valuable as formal experience.

If you care about preserving the Church's past for the continuation of its future, please consider joining the committee. Further information is available in the Book of Order, or speak with an existing member.

Church Book Committee

In the Church Book Committee, our two main roles are keeping the Book of Order up-to-date and the organisation of the biennial Synod. Before Synod we prepare the agenda paper, examine and prepare proposals, and compile nomination forms for the Provincial Board and Provincial committee elections. After Synod, we write the official record of Synod and revise the Book of Order in line with resolutions directed by Synod. This can range from a minor change in wording, to an overhaul of the entire book.

In recent years, our biggest achievement was the standardisation of gendered terminology throughout the entire Book of Order. Ongoing and upcoming projects are revamping the nomination process for the Provincial Board and Provincial committees, and acting as a search committee to find suitable candidates for positions on the Provincial Board.

Meetings are mainly held during a Synodal year and can be as frequent as once a month during that year. They are always held virtually so no travel is required. The frequency of meetings after Synod are dependent on the number of resolutions, how complex they are and how much work is needed to action them.

This Synod, there are two vacancies up for election for a four-year term. Membership is currently well-balanced for age, experience, and gender. It would be great to have nominations from the Irish and Yorkshire Districts as we are lacking representation from each. We welcome anyone to put themselves forward, whether you have been to Synod before or not. All you need is an active interest in the way the church operates at a Provincial level and a keen eye for detail. With our upcoming projects, it would be great to have someone with experience in recruitment.

What does the Provincial Church Service Committee (CSC) do?

The Provincial Church Service Committee (formerly the Church Service Advisory Board) exists:

- To promote and encourage all areas of church service.
- To advise on the selection and training of candidates for Church service, at home and abroad, and to keep under review the progress of candidates in training until the completion of their period of supervised service.
- To plan and organise the continuing training of ministers and lay workers.
- To oversee the initial and continuing training of lay preachers and lay leaders.

The Church Service Committee consists of four members of the Moravian Church in the British Province, elected by nomination and ballot at Synod and holding office until their successors are elected; at least one Bishop, agreed by the Bishops; and members of the Provincial Board deputed by that Board. The committee meets twice a year (in February/March and October) with a set agenda, and once (in June) at an Away Day to discuss chosen issues in greater depth. The Committee responds to enquiries for ministry and advises on the training of Ministers. The Committee oversees the Pastoral Supervision of Ministers and Paid Church Workers through the Pastoral Supervision Co-ordinator. The Committee advises on the training of Lay Preachers and Pastors, and organises retreats and in-service training for Church Workers. If you are interested in knowing more about, or being involved in, the work of this Committee, please speak to Br Peter Gubi or to Sr Lorraine Shorten, Chair of the Church Service Committee.

Mission and Society Committee

The Mission and Society Committee would like to encourage members of The British Province, to put themselves forward to serve on the Provincial Committees. One challenge is that many people are not aware of what the committees do, nor understand what serving involves.

The Mission and Society Committee plays a vital role in helping the Church reflect

and respond to issues that affect our Christian belief and practice within society. The committee's purpose is to inform, advise, and support the Church in matters of social justice, ethics, and community engagement, ensuring that our Christian voice is heard in public life.

Members of the committee are appointed for a period of four years, bringing with them a range of experiences from church life and the wider world. The committee benefits from contributions by subject matter experts, representatives from government departments, and partner organisations, who offer insight into current issues and emerging trends.

The Mission and Society committee is formed of four members who are elected at Synod (two individuals are up for election at each Synod). The Provincial Board support the committee and one of the Bishops. Additionally, a member from the Messenger Editorial team is invited to attend.

The Mission and Society Committee normally meets four times a year (one in person and three online).

While the Book of Order provides the basic framework for the committee's operation, it does not fully convey the dynamic and rewarding nature of the work involved. Serving on the Mission and Society Committee offers an opportunity to contribute to the Church's witness in society, engage with important contemporary issues, and help shape how we, as a community of faith, respond to the challenges of our time.

Youth and Children's Committee (YCC)

What do we do?

The YCC helps look after the youth and children's work in the Province. This includes provincial events like Summer Camp, supporting district activities by advising Provincial Board on the appointment of district youth workers, local work by organising MOYRAC, wider European and international discussions by supporting unity youth work meetings and organising people to attend them and holding broader discussions about youth and children inclusion in our Church.

How?

We meet in person about 3-4 times a year and then throughout the year online as and when it's needed. In person meetings are usually preceded by a time of fellowship, which is very important when it comes to working together on the important issues we cover.

Who can join?



Anyone with an interest in youth and children's work. You don't have to be an expert but if you know how important the children and young people are to the future and the present of our Church then please apply to join the committee this coming synod.

What's going to happen going forward?

Honestly, who can tell? We're working with the Provincial Board on supporting the appointment of district youth workers, reenergising Summer Camp, working on ways to keep young people connected to the church and each other when they reach adulthood, increasing our online output and looking at ways to increase and consecrate youth leadership in our Church.

University of Chester

Research Advert



Research Study

What are the lived experiences of those who have experienced suicidal ideation and hold an active Christian faith?

Have you...

- Have you experienced suicidal ideation whilst being a practicing Christian?
- Have you been an active member of a church whilst experiencing suicidal ideation;
- Are you a resident in England or Wales;
- Are you aged 18+;
- Are you sufficiently grounded in your experience to be able to talk about with without undue upset;
- Are you sufficiently fluent in English to be able to engage in research.
- Not currently be undergoing treatment for suicidal ideation.

If so, then I'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch via my email address 2320769@chester.ac.uk. You will then receive a Participant Information Sheet with further details of the study and be asked to participate in a recorded interview via Microsoft Teams, lasting approximately an hour. This will be a semi-structured interview where you will be asked to reflect on and share your experiences.

Contact: Bethany Peirson.
Email: 2320769@chester.ac.uk
Valid until: 01.06.2026

Research is supervised by Revd Professor Peter M. Gubi



Notice to Congregations about the MORYAC weekend

The upcoming MORYAC training weekend is approaching, and we would like to encourage you all to find two people from your congregations to attend. To make this more appealing the Provincial Board have agreed to cover the cost of the weekend for one person. So, we would like to encourage your congregations to cover the funding for the second person to attend as well. There will be no provincial expenses for the cost of traveling to the weekend, but again perhaps this is something you as congregations could look at helping with. We believe that this weekend will be a valuable time of sharing ideas and fellowship and learning about new ways to develop children and family ministry in your congregations and we are working hard on firming up the timetable and speakers for the weekend.

However, as things stand, currently there is not enough interest to make running the weekend viable. We must now set a cut off point for applications as Easter Sunday. Please email Sr Claire Maxwell (claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk) to register for a place. If you know you will not be able to send anyone to the weekend, then please also let us know because then we might be able to offer extra places to those congregations seeking to send more than two people.

MORYAC 2026

Training Opportunity for Youth, Family and Sunday School Leaders
Theme: Cultural Preparation - how to prepare your church for a thriving youth and families ministry.



Hayes Centre, Swanwick DE55 1AU
from 9th to 11th October 2026
25 Places Available
£50

2 spaces are being held for each congregation initially at booking.

If your Sunday School / Youth team is bigger than 2 we will attempt to accommodate you once we have established numbers.

To register initial interest please email
Rev. Claire Maxwell: claire.maxwell@moravian.org.uk
There will be a form she will send you to fill in.

THE BRITISH PROVINCE OF THE UNITAS FRATRUM (MORAVIAN CHURCH). Charity number: 251211

Br James Woolford Chair of YCC

'What I Believe'

Moravian Messenger editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Br Peter Vogt



Br Peter is the co-minister of Herrnhut Moravian Church in Germany and is the lead for theological education in the European Continental Province. Herrnhut is one of the four settlements in the World Heritage Transnational Sites 'Moravian Church Settlements'.

Tell us a bit about your background, family and education

I grew up in Königsfeld in the Black Forest, a traditional Moravian settlement congregation. My father was an architect, my mother a teacher. On my father's side, the family had long roots in the Moravian Church. He and his mother fled in 1945 out of Silesia and moved from East Germany to the West in the 1950s. My parents had a liberal outlook on life, yet it was a given that we participated in the life of our Moravian congregation.

Growing up Moravian was a wonderful experience: it meant being part of a larger and very friendly community; we had special celebrations like the Children's Festival Day and Lovefeasts; and I enjoyed learning to play trumpet in the brass band. More importantly, I made friends with church members whose faith and personal character impressed me deeply. One example is an older sister who was blind, whom I helped to write letters, and learned much about her life. We also had a great youth group. I found church life very encouraging, providing a trustworthy footing but also helping me to explore new experiences.

How did you come to faith?

I was not baptised as an infant. At that time, my parents felt it would be better that I and my two younger sisters should make that decision ourselves when we were older. So, as I grew up, I often asked myself, do I want to be baptised and am I ready to take that step? I was curious about God, but I did not have a 'conversion experience' as others did. I decided to be baptised when I was 18, partly because I realised that I do not have to have the 'perfect faith', and partly because I wanted to affirm my belonging to the Moravian Church. Over time, I have become more aware that faith means trust, even if you don't know everything, and that for me this trust is closely linked to the community of the church and its tradition.

What led you into the ministry, and how did you hear God's call?

As I grew up, I greatly admired the pastors in our congregation, Br Hellmuth Reichel and Br Henning Schlimm, and imagined myself following their path of ministry. In my teenage years I thought that studying theology would solve some of my religious questions but was not sure whether I was spiritually mature enough for being a pastor. After finishing High School, I spent five months in the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, working as a volunteer. There I met theology students and pastors from various countries and denominations and realised that they were just as human as me. So that helped me to make my decisions. One of the people I met in Geneva was Jill, my future wife.

Where and how did you train?

I began my studies at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for a Bachelor of Arts with emphasis on religious studies. Then, I spent one year at Moravian Theological Seminary

in the Master of Divinity program and transferred to Harvard Divinity School in Boston after Jill and I got married. Finally, I spent six years at Boston University School of Theology, completing my studies for doctoral degree in theology. I greatly enjoyed studying and discovered that academic research is part of my spiritual calling.

In addition to the formal training, when Jill and I got married in 1993, she was already a pastor in a congregational church in New England, and so I gained first-hand experience of ministry as a pastor's spouse for eight years.

What has been your greatest joy so far in ministry, and what do you struggle with?

There are two experiences that stand out: distributing the elements in Holy Communion and greeting many people after church on Christmas Eve and Easter Morning. I think both reflect moments of deep connection with people, which I find very fulfilling.

I enjoy most parts of my work, but I struggle with balancing out the various demands.

Are you afraid to die? Can you look beyond death and what does that look like?

A hard question. What it comes down to: I trust that God will lead me through and that in the end there will be the peace in fullness.

What do you think that World Heritage status brings to the wider Moravian Church?

The World Heritage title for 'Moravian Church Settlements' expresses a recognition of the importance and value of the whole network of Moravian places and activities. The four settlements that are part of the World Heritage Site cannot be separated from the rest of the church, but they exemplify what is extraordinary and valuable in all. This includes our intangible values: spiritual life, a caring community, customs and traditions, the faithful witness of many generations. Sometimes we think that no one in society cares about these things and the message of the Gospel that stands behind. The World Heritage recognition, however, tells us that they really matter. It really is an enormous mission opportunity.

Some personal preferences - favourite film, book, music and why?

I enjoy listening to classical music, playing trombone and singing. It's a good balance to intellectual work.

The place where you feel closest to God?

Another difficult question: I've had moments with a sense of God's closeness in the subway, in church, during a morning walk, or in conversation with another person.

What inscription would you like on your gravestone or epitaph, if any?

Have not yet made up my mind.

Report of the Spring Irish District Conference on 14 February

The Irish District conference met at University Road, Belfast on a chilly Saturday morning when 17 delegates were welcomed with a cup of tea and toasted pancakes with a choice of strawberry jam, lemon curd, chocolate sauce and fresh cream. The conference looked first at the four district accounts, which are the district MWA (Moravian Women's Association), district youth, men's breakfast and general district. All were healthy.

The Provincial Board report was received, and memories were shared of Br Leslie Robinson, whose brother Colin had been a minister in the Irish District 1976-1977.

A sometimes-passionate debate then took place in respect of the Provincial Board report and the fact it had gone back to the previous information style after the last two reports which had outlined strategy, direction and finance. It was thought that in the Irish District there was a preference for the going forward style and let the *Moravian Messenger* carry the information, but the district accepted that other districts were not fond of the strategy style.

The Provincial Board were asked to consider for Synods going forward from 2028 not to have Synod between 7-17 July due to this being the main holiday

fortnight in Ireland and it made it difficult for delegates to travel from both a cost perspective and availability. The Provincial Board was also asked to consider hosting Synod in Northern Ireland as there were suitable conference facilities available. The Irish district has only hosted synod three times in the last 125 years, the last one in 1996 and the district would help the Provincial Board with logistics if asked.

In relation to youth work, the district had asked for a grant, but this had not arrived so it was suggested that confirmation would be sought on its current position and if necessary, a new bid placed.

The district spent time in planning events for the district and these included having a midterm district conference in June, a German Moravian brass band concert a note of summer Fayre's in Kilwarlin, Ballinderry and Gracehill, a men's breakfast with speaker at the end of April and attendance at the annual Northern Ireland agricultural show with a stand promoting the Moravian Church (think Welsh show, Built Wells or Harrogate or Royal Highland show).

It was also decided to repeat our district summer BBQ which had 104 people attend last year and after discussion it was agreed to continue Holiday Church

at the seaside holiday town of Portrush which is 30 miles from the nearest congregation, so this requires commitment.

The conference also heard of a current update on the work in the Republic of Ireland which now was at one service a quarter, the ongoing project to digitise the Irish district archives, a forthcoming archive exhibition, and also the upcoming Cooper lecture being organised by the Moravian Church in Ireland, heritage and history society.

The conference then had ecumenical updates firstly in relation to the Armagh agreement between the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Church and then Sr Sarah Groves spoke on her two year presidency of the Irish Council of Churches (only the second Moravian in 104 years) which ends in April 2026.

Sr Lynsey spoke on Project 32 and that University Road was soon to start its second survey.

Br David Howarth representing the Provincial Board chaired the annual elections of a district Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, Christian Aid Ireland rep, ICC AGM reps.

All in all, a busy conference.

Br Mark Kernohan
IDC Chair

Br Dick Porter reports on the Spring District Conference of the Moravian Churches in Yorkshire on 14 February

The Yorkshire district cannot afford the number of ministers it has at present, the spring meeting of the region's Moravian Churches was told. Br Kenneth Evans asked: 'Would more stipendiary ministers help the situation?' Br Evans added that Yorkshire had 161 members and the equivalent of 3.8 ministers. He added: 'According to my working out, Yorkshire cannot afford the number of ministers that we have long term.' Br Philip Cooper said the United Reform Church decided how many ministers it could afford, then appointed them. 'There is nothing to stop this happening with the Moravian Church', he said. Br Edwin Quildan, the Provincial Board representative, said: 'We need people to come forward.' He said no further ministerial appointment had been issued. The congregation at Leominster, Herts, was still interregnum and Harlesden in London continued to seek support from the United Reform Church. More ministerial retirements were also on the way, Br Quildan warned.

The subject of Fulneck School, which closed in July 2024, was also raised. Fulneck was a more difficult option than Ockbrook School in Derbyshire, which

shut its doors in 2021, said Br Evans, with Ockbrook being more self-contained. The Board said significant sums of money would have to be spent repairing the roof of the Robinson Building in Fulneck. Agents have now been appointed to begin marketing the buildings.

Sisters Jane Carter, Janet Cooper, Roberta Hoey, Mary Holmes and Norma Maynard had attended the Unity Women's consultation in Arusha, Tanzania, which looked at gender-based violence.

Summer Camp this year will take a different form, the conference was told. There will be no main camp but a number of smaller ones across the Province, with a view to Summer Camp returning in 2027.

There is to be a full-time Youth and Family Work Enabler, paid for by the board, to move between Yorkshire and Lancashire over a two-year period. Sr Chris Porter expressed her doubts over a full-time worker when the church was in such financial straits. She talked of her concern at the increasingly ageing congregations and the possibility of addressing their needs. Sr Claire Maxwell replied that

youth workers in the church were seen as a positive step. She said: 'Family growth has been proven.'

On the financial front, the Board knew that congregations were facing challenges, including the difficulties in identifying treasurers. Br Quildan confirmed the Board could provide help with job descriptions and PAYE.

It was agreed that the Come Alive in 25 joint celebration had been a success and enjoyed by all. It was decided to try the event once more and that ministers should decide a date.

Br and Sr Gledhill, Lower Wyke, having completed three years' training, were confirmed as Lay Worship Leaders and will also be recognised ecumenically.

Br Cooper (Gomersal and Wellhouse) expressed concerns about the way the assessment in the Moravian Church was calculated. Growth in congregation size did not always improve finances, so adjusting assessment percentages was suggested. Some congregations are struggling and Br Evans wondered if enlisting more non-stipendiary ministers could help.

Leicester

Recent weeks and months have been full, rich with shared worship, fellowship, and moments that remind us of who we are as a community. Looking back, we give thanks for the many ways people have come together across cultures, generations, and churches. Our partnership with Wadadli Link UK, including the Thanksgiving Service for the Independence of Antigua and Barbuda, continues to express deep connections with the Caribbean. The Leicester Moravian Church anniversary weekend, celebrated with a joyful Caribbean meal, remains an annual highlight, while mid-week services, social gatherings, and events supported through the Awards for All programme have created space for reflection, participation, and friendship. The Christingle Service brought the meaning of Christmas close to all of us, young and old alike.

As we entered the new year, the Evensong led by Leicester Cathedral Junior Choir drew together people from many churches and community groups, especially from Wesley Hall Methodist Church and Community Centre. It was a moment of beauty and unity - one that Jenny De Young had been especially looking forward to.



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Jenny's passing shortly before that service has left a deep sense of loss. She was a woman of extraordinary warmth, unwavering faith, and tireless devotion to people and community. Jenny had a rare gift for bringing people together. Through church life, quiet conversations, practical care, and joyful celebration, she created spaces where everyone felt welcomed, valued, and at home. She reached across every boundary with compassion and sincerity, ensuring no one was ever left out.

Sr Simi Patel and Br Solomon Joseph

NOTICES

Friends of the Archive Day 2026



You are invited to the Friends of the Archive Day at Moravian Church House in London which will be held between 2pm-4pm on Saturday 13th June 2026. We would like to celebrate and take this opportunity to thank everyone for their generous support over the years of the Provincial Archives here and invite others who would like to learn more or have interest about the work here.

There will be a talk about the work of the Keevills who helped to establish the Sikonge Hospital in Tanzania in 1923 and will also showcase some of the wonderful treasures within our archives. Refreshments will be provided.

Please let the archivist, Lorraine Parsons, know if you would like to join us on this day or if you have any queries contact her at: archive@moravian.org.uk.

We look forward to seeing you here at Church House.

Art Competition

Dr Livingstone Thompson and Professor Peter Gubi, along with several scholars in the Worldwide Moravian Church, are currently engaged in bringing together a book entitled: Current Trends in Moravian Theology and Mission: The legacy of 13th August, 1727.

On 13th August, 1727, during a Holy Communion service at the Lutheran parish church in Berthelsdorf, the members of the Herrnhut community experienced a profound moment of spiritual renewal and reconciliation. It was like an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which manifested itself in that, as one person observed, 'we learned to love one another'. For this reason, the day is considered the spiritual 'birthday' of the renewed Unitas Fratrum (Moravian Church). It also has been called the 'Moravian Pentecost', although there were no signs of ecstatic or extraordinary spiritual manifestations. With this new sense of unity and purpose, the Herrnhut community was transformed to grow into a movement for mission and evangelism of international scope. 13th August 1727 is therefore a reference point within the Renewed Moravian Church. The year 2027 marks the 300th anniversary of that event.

The book, which will be released to mark the 300th Anniversary, aims to celebrate that event, but also to reflect on the

legacy of the Renewed Moravian Church in today's Church, and to encourage thinking across the Unitas Fratrum of how the past may help determine a future direction for the Worldwide Moravian Church.

One would think that such an important event would have been artistically represented in some way, but search as we have, there seems to be no such artistic representation. So, we are launching an art competition to create an image that captures this event of 13th August 1727. Artists, from across the Unity are being invited to participate and to submit entries for this competition.

The image adjudicated to be the winning image will feature on the cover of the book and the winner will be awarded £500. A maximum of three complimentary awards of £100 will also be given for other submissions that are selected for inclusion in the book. All awarded works will reside in the Moravian Archives of the British Province and be owned by the Moravian Church, British Province.

The closing date for the art competition is 31st July 2026. Please submit your images digitally to Professor Peter Gubi at peter.gubi@moravian.org.uk or by post (postal address available on demand). We look forward to your participation and to seeing products of the creative talent across the Unity.

Are you interested in Church Service or do you know of anyone who might be good in Church Service?

We are all called

As Christians, we are all called, through Baptism, to live a life of service according to our gifts and talents. This calling can be fulfilled outside of the Church, but it can also be fulfilled through it. Indeed, the Church needs 'servants' (people who sacrificially give in terms of finance, talents, time and gifts) to function, grow, and be a force for good in the local community and throughout the world. So how might you offer to serve?

Vocation

The word 'vocation' comes from the Latin word 'vocare', which means 'call'. Some people literally hear God calling them in dreams, visions and through others - but not everyone is called in those ways. Central to the lives of many Christians is the idea that God has called them to do something meaningful with their lives, and that their lives have purpose and meaning as a result of fulfilling that calling. The Bible is full of examples of people being called and offering themselves to the service of God and others. Each of these callings is to a sacred role, but not all are called to ordained priesthood - although they are arguably callings to forms of 'lay ministry' and holy leadership, rather than to secular work. Vocation can probably simply be described as 'an itch to serve God that won't go away'. There is something about it that won't go away, or be at peace, unless you respond to it. Often, it

can be simply about identifying a need, recognising that you have the gifts, experience and talent needed, and then offering yourself for that role.

Service in the Church

There are many opportunities in the Church to serve God, others and the Church. Simply put, God needs our hands, feet, time and talent to do His/Her work. There are various roles in congregations that need filling; there are various roles on provincial committees that need filling; there is the possibility of service in another country; there is also ordained ministry.

What steps can I take?

If you are even a little bit interested in exploring how you might serve God through the Church, or know of someone who might have gifts to offer, please speak to your Minister. Be clear about what gifts and time you have to offer, and explore with him/her what the needs of the Church are, to see what you can offer.

Overseas service

If you are interested in offering for overseas work, which is usually voluntary, then ask your Minister to give you the details of the Chair of the Provincial Board.

Offering for ordained ministry

If you are even a little bit interested in

exploring how you might serve the Church in ordained ministry, please speak initially to your Minister who will explore your sense of vocation with you. S/he will ask you to speak with the Chair of the Church Service Committee or one of the Bishops. If s/he and others see it in you, you will then be encouraged to make a formal application to the Provincial Board. Once received, the Chair of the Provincial Board will invite you for a chat. You will need to have various assessments for aptitude, readiness and ability to embrace the training involved, and you will have to meet with the Church Service Committee and Provincial Board, but although these sound intimidating, hopefully you won't find the meetings so - but simply as an opportunity to further explore your sense of vocation conversationally. If accepted, a suitable training programme will be identified for you. This usually (but not exclusively) takes place at Northern College in Manchester. If you are from Northern Ireland, more local theological colleges have been identified that you could train with. There are several categories of ordained ministry - full-time, part-time, stipendiary (paid) or non-stipendiary (unpaid) - or a mixture of these categories. Where you might fit in depends on your other commitments, the support of your family, what you feel called to, and what the Church needs. We look forward to hearing from you.

Br Peter Gubi

Church Service Committee

FROM CHURCH HOUSE

Provincial Diary for April

10	Proposals for changing the Book of Order to be received by the Provincial Board	
15-16	Provincial Board Meeting	Church House
27	Mission and Society Committee Meeting	Online
30	Faith and Order Committee Meeting	Online

Hurricane Melissa Appeal

The British Province is supporting recovery efforts following devastation left by Hurricane Melissa. To donate now, please contact Church House or go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/hurricanemelissaappeal

DATES TO REMEMBER

- 1 First Day of Passover - Jewish
- 3 Good Friday
- 5 Easter Sunday
- 6 Easter Monday
- 9 Last day of Passover - Jewish
- 12 Orthodox Easter - Orthodox
- 23 St George's Day
- 28 International Workers' Memorial Day (<http://28april.org/>)

Faith and Film:

How movies and cinema can teach us about God and our faith

The Passion of the Christ

-The pain before the victory



This month in Faith and Film I decided to cover something more overtly Christian by looking at the controversial film *The Passion of The Christ* that was released in 2004. The film was directed, written and produced by Mel Gibson who has now become a very problematic figure but for the benefit of this article, I'm not going to focus on that!

Gibson's film chronicles the final 12 hours of Jesus' life and while he also uses flashbacks to show other parts of Jesus' story the main focus is upon the pain and anguish of the passion. The film is spoken largely in Aramaic, but it also uses Hebrew and Latin. It stars a relatively unknown actor at the time, Jim Caviezel, as Jesus and is supported by a cast of other largely unknown actors. The film was made for an estimated \$30 million and made a worldwide box office of over \$610 million. By any standards, that's a huge hit. Something that shouldn't be a surprise given its subject matter and how the christian community often comes out in force to support media based on our faith.

As is always the case when an interpretation of scripture meets the world of art (whether that's film, stage, ballet, or paintings) it brought with it a great deal of controversy with some religious groups staging protests outside and inside the cinemas that were showing the film. We all have our own understanding of scripture and whenever you adapt anything you make editorial choices as to what to focus on and what

to leave on the cutting room floor. There are definitely elements of this film that I don't like. For me, the worst part is the depiction of the devil in a literal physical form throughout crucial scenes showing all the subtlety of a sledgehammer and takes the internal wrestling Jesus does in the garden of Gethsemane and makes it almost a school ground bullying scene with the devil poking fun and tempting Jesus. However, overall, I found watching this movie when it came out a profoundly moving, challenging and inspiring experience.

The main controversy in the film was, for me, it's greatest strength. It's scenes depicting the torture, whipping and crucifixion are incredibly gory and difficult to watch, earning the film an 18 rating. As a big horror fan, there are scenes here that shocked even me with its graphic nature and eye watering realistic special effects. Well respected film critic Robert Ebert described it as 'the most violent film I have ever seen'. This graphic depiction saw people faint in cinemas and two separate incidents were reported where people suffered fatal heart attacks during the crucifixion scene. Caviezel himself suffered greatly during the making of the film. With the film being made in Italy during winter he suffered bouts of Pneumonia and hyperthermia and during the flogging scene a couple of errant shots made it through and left him with a 14-inch scar on his back. He was even struck by lightning during the sermon on the Mount scene. This was

not an easy film to make!

So why then do I think that this controversy and graphic depiction of the passion is the film's great strength? Precisely because it's hard to watch. The suffering that Jesus went through was excruciating, bloody, humiliating and that is the point. Many churches and Christians sanitise what was in reality the most brutal death that could be offered to people at the time and they do this to avoid what is an uncomfortable truth. I think it's also partially because of our love for Jesus that we can't stand the thought of what He went through but the fact He went through all that, in all it's pain and suffering, for our sake, is what makes it the Good News of the Gospel of Salvation so special. The more we realise just how bad it was, the more we can appreciate how incredible it is that He went through it for us.

It's hard to really live in the space of despair and grief of Good Friday today. That's because we know that it wasn't the end and that Easter is coming. Therefore, the challenge is to find ways to live in that space of discomfort and pain, and films like *The Passion of the Christ*, help us to truly grasp how great the sacrifice was that Jesus made for our sakes. Then, and only then, can we really celebrate the full joy of Easter.

Br James Woolford

*Minister of Dukinfield and Royton
Moravian Congregations*

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