



MAY 2026

# Pentecost

## God's Communication Strategy

The story of Pentecost in Acts 2 is often remembered for wind, fire, and the astonishment of people hearing voices in their own language. One idea that we do not hear with equal force, is how Pentecost is about creating understanding across language divides. With that in mind, this article will explore the connections between Pentecost, the Moravian event of 13th August 1727 and the rise of the Pentecost movement.

### Pentecost as an Anti-Babel Moment

In Acts 2, we learn that the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in other tongues. The gathered crowd responds with amazement because each one heard their own language being spoken. The miracle in that moment is sometimes over looked and should not be confused with the religious excitement. The miracle is about the communication made possible by God. The miracle was the divine communication strategy. The good news was not to be trapped inside a single culture, accent, or sacred dialect. It was to audible to Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Romans, Cretans, Arabs, and others gathered in Jerusalem.

The story of Pentecost may remind us of the Babel confusion in the book of Genesis, where divisions and disunity hindered progress and achievements. Babel is the memory of human division, confusion, and estrangement. As an event that overcomes confusion, which that different languages may create, Pentecost becomes an anti-Babel moment. Pentecost is not a reversal that flattens humanity into sameness, but a redemption of human plurality for the praise of God. People do not cease to be many peoples. Rather, they are addressed as they are, and yet drawn into one body in Christ through the Spirit's gift of intelligible witness.

Understood as anti-Babel moment, Pentecost can serve as important imperative for unity in the Christian community. Christian unity is not achieved by demanding that everyone sound alike, pray alike, or carry the same cultural habits. At Pentecost, the Spirit honours difference while creating communion. The church becomes most fully itself not when it speaks in a way only insiders understand, but when it speaks Christ so faithfully and hospitably that outsiders also can truly hear.

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## Editorial

By the time you read this we may be in an early summer but now at the time of writing, it feels like it has been raining forever. A brief dry spell has allowed me an hour in the garden (which badly needs it) but it is due to rain again this afternoon.

We expect rain in the spring but the rainfall this year has been extraordinary. Flooding due to a factor of high rainfall and water-soaked land is another increasing risk. We expect winds in the winter but the gales over the past few years have been very strong and destructive. There has been significant loss of important trees and fears increased for people living near to big and tall trees.

The changing weather patterns have created issues for farmers and growers - what crops will grow successfully and what will fail in these new times.

But the issues we face here are nothing compared to the problems that people in other parts of the world have to cope with. In Christian Aid Week in May, we will be learning about an urban farming project in Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi has become a huge city because of the migration of people from the surrounding countryside because farming has become so difficult due to droughts brought on by climate change in recent years. What Christian Aid are attempting to do there with local people to encourage them to grow their own food in tiny spaces that they and their families live in, in the unofficial settlements in Nairobi. It is truly inspirational.

The people of Jamaica have years of reconstruction ahead of them following Hurricane Melissa, folk in Assam and Manipur suffer badly from rain and flooding and so it goes

on. I know that there have been storms and dreadful weather throughout history, but there is no doubt that these bad weather incidents are increasing in intensity and frequency due to human induced climate change.

We used to think that global warming would actually mean less rain and more sunshine here. Now we are aware that the warming planet means warmer oceans creating changing weather patterns with more and heavier rain in some places, stronger winds and drought in other areas.

Fossil fuels such as oil are major factors in creating the greenhouse effect that leads to climate change. Ironically the war on Iran and the consequences on the Straits of Hormuz have highlighted our dependence on oil. We have continued to rely on fossil fuels instead of actively working for a renewable energy strategy and less damaging climate solutions.

We may not be able to reverse the change that has already happened, but we owe it to our brothers and sisters here and across the world to encourage and invest in alternative renewable energies, to use less energy and 'things' and to share the wealth that we have. Why should the ones who have done least to damage our 'common home' be the ones who bear the worst consequences of what is happening. A great way to start this change is to support Christian Aid this month!



**Sr Sarah Groves**  
Editorial Team

## University professor makes history with higher doctorate honour

Press Release: 30 March 2026

A professor has made history at the University of Chester by becoming the first member of staff to be awarded a Doctor of Letters degree.

Joining hundreds of students for the March graduation ceremonies, Reverend Professor Peter Gubi collected his higher doctorate at Chester Cathedral. It is only the third time a higher doctorate has been awarded - other than Honorary Doctorates - by the University of Chester.

Peter holds a personal Chair as Professor of Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Chester.

A higher doctorate is an exceptional award made for work of high distinction



which constitutes an original, sustained and significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge, or the application of knowledge, where it establishes that the applicant is a leading international authority in the field of study concerned. The applicant's published work must demonstrate an originality such as to have led to extension or development by others.

Peter already has a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Counselling Studies (Manchester), a Doctor of Theology (ThD) degree in

Practical Theology (Winchester), and a Doctor of Ministry degree (DMin) in Ecclesiastical Pastoral Care (Chester).

He is known for his research work in the ethical integration of spiritual resources

in the practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy; for his work in supporting Clergy well-being and pastoral care through Reflective Practice Groups and Pastoral Supervision; and for his work on the ethical integration of psychological and spiritual insights within the context of Spiritual Accompaniment.

His work was assessed by a number of international scholars before recommendations were made to the Conferment Committee of the Senate of the University of Chester, who bestowed the award.

Peter said: 'I am grateful to the University of Chester for recognising my research work, conducted over 25 years, with a Higher Doctorate. Half of that time has been spent at the University of Chester, where my research work - which is largely outside of mainstream thinking and practice - has always been supported, valued and respected.'

**Communications Team**  
University of Chester

## Raising Faith Monthly from the Youth and Children's Committee (YCC)

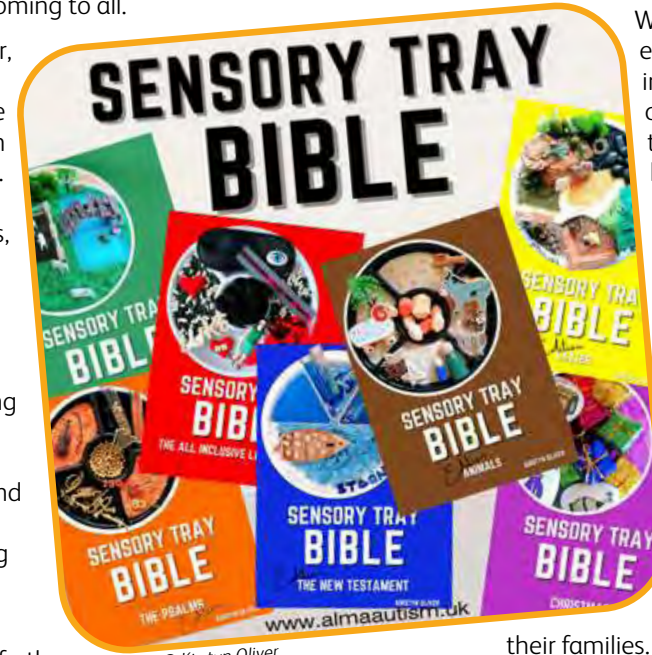
Our article this month comes from **Alma Autism**, and we hope this inspires you as it did us, your YCC Committee: Sr Katie Groves-Bond, Br Kieran Hopton, Sr Lol Wood, Sr Claire Maxwell, Sr Rachel Hamilton and Br James Woolford.

Alma Autism is a faith-based initiative dedicated to equipping churches to better understand, include, and support individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. Rooted in compassion and guided by the love of Christ, Alma Autism provides resources, training, and community connections to help congregations become more inclusive and welcoming to all.

Founded in 2018 by Kirstyn Oliver, Alma Autism began with a vision to raise awareness and acceptance of autism and neurodiversity within churches and community groups. Through pop-up sensory rooms, training seminars, and workshops, the initiative has since grown to reach communities across six continents.

Kirstyn's journey began in 2013 while working closely with a young autistic girl with complex needs. Recognising her unique way of learning, Kirstyn supported her and her family over two years, an experience that sparked a lifelong passion for supporting autistic individuals.

The creation of Alma Autism was further shaped by Kirstyn's Master's degree in Autism Studies (2017), where she researched faith, spirituality, and autistic people. Her findings revealed a significant gap: autism was rarely discussed in churches, and the spiritual needs of autistic individuals and their families were largely unsupported. In response, Kirstyn began raising awareness within her own church and community, which soon expanded more widely.



© Kirstyn Oliver

The name 'Alma', meaning 'soul' in Portuguese, reflects the mission: to support every individual in thriving spiritually and connecting with God in their own unique way. One key approach is through sensory engagement, helping individuals experience Bible stories and worship through the senses.

With a background in special education, Kirstyn developed the innovative Sensory Tray Bible, a creative, sensory-based method of teaching Scripture. What began in her local church has grown into a widely used resource, supported by a series of published books. Kirstyn is currently undertaking doctoral research to explore the broader impact of sensory-based approaches in teaching Scripture.

Alongside her work with Alma Autism, Kirstyn serves as a children and families minister in South London. She is also a respite foster carer for a child with Angelman's Syndrome, continuing her deep commitment to supporting children with diverse needs and

their families.

To find out more about how to create sensory tray Bible stories, or more about Alma Autism's work, you can go to Facebook, Instagram or the website [www.almaautism.uk](http://www.almaautism.uk) Every person has the ability to know God in their own unique way and understanding how to best support someone is by getting to know them, their needs and desires.

## Worldwide Prayer Meeting - a First for the Unity

At the beginning of March, the bishops of the Northern Province of the United States issued a call for other bishops in the Unity to join them in prayer online. This call for prayer was based on events in the United States and across the world. Subsequent to that Israel and the United States began bombing Iran and Israel continued with bombing Lebanon. This war is continuing.

The online prayer meeting was held on 30th March and involved 23 bishops from the United States (Northern and Southern Provinces), Czechia, Switzerland, Germany, UK, Eastern West Indies, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, and

South Africa.

In the end the scope of the prayers was wide ranging bringing in recent disasters in Alaska, a typhoon in Halong, flooding in Czechia, continuing issues following Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica, and the problems in Cuba. There were prayers for the alleviation of hunger and disease, for current issues in the United States and for the Moravian Unity. These prayers were offered by bishops from many parts of the Unity.

The whole time of prayer was extremely well coordinated and a blessing to me and I pray to those places and situations

that we prayed for. It was the first attempt to bring the Bishops of the Moravian Church together in prayer and I hope that other prayer vigils might be held in the future.

To quote from the invitation letter from the bishops of the Northern Province 'We believe in the power and potency of prayer, so we join our hearts and minds and take these concerns to the Holy One who creates, redeems, and blesses all God's children in the world.' May we continue to pray!

**Sr Sarah Groves**  
Bishop of the Unity

# Pentecost God's Communication Strategy

(continued from front page)

## Herrnhut and the Moravian Pentecost

August 13, 1727, remains so central in Moravian memory. The community at Herrnhut had been troubled by deep tensions and serious conflicts, prompting Zinzendorf to introduce the Brotherly Agreement and call the settlement into renewed prayer, Bible study, and mutual love. During the Holy Communion service at Berthelsdorf on 13th August, the congregation experienced a profound renewal and reconciliation that later generations would call the spiritual rebirth of the Unitas Fratrum.

The Pentecost idea in 13th August 1727 arose not principally from ecstatic display but from the recognition of the fruits of the Spirit, especially love. People learned to love one another, a theme that would influence characterisation of what is central to the Moravian Church. The prerequisite for salvation, which even children call or show, is to love Jesus. The sign of the Spirit's coming was not noise for its own sake, but a transformed communal life in which old hostilities gave way to forgiveness, shared devotion, and common purpose.

James Montgomery's famous poetic retelling captured this connection between love and the ability of children to model it, in hymn 15 of the 1960 MHB:

*Glory to the Holy Ghost;  
be this day of Pentecost;  
Children's minds may he inspire,  
touch their tongues with holy fire.  
Glory to the highest be,  
to the Blessed Trinity,  
for the Gospel from above  
For the word that 'God is love.'*

## From Pentecostal Renewal to Mission

In Herrnhut, the Spirit seems to have created an impetus for mission by empowering the whole community. Mission was born when estranged believers were taught again to love and to hear one another in Christ. Pentecost, in this Moravian framing, is the creation of a people whose common speech is love, praise, and obedience.

The connection between August 1727 and Moravian missionary outreach is probably more than sentimental hindsight. The fact that by 1732 the first missionaries had been sent to the West Indies makes it plausible to connect 1727 and the 1732 missionary impulse. On 8th October 1732, the first two Moravian missionaries sailed from Copenhagen to St Thomas, marking the beginning of a remarkable missionary era.

Within a relatively short period, the renewed Moravian Church developed a global missionary impulse far out of proportion to its size. By 1760 the church had sent out 226 missionaries, and by 1832 there were 42 Moravian mission stations around the world. The assertion, if established as true, that within fifteen years of the first sending in 1732, Moravians had sent out hundreds of missionaries and established churches on every continent, would be simply astounding.

Seen in light of Acts 2, this would be more than heroic expansion. Without minimising errors and failings of the Moravian mission

to enslaved people, we can assert that Pentecost drove people of the church outward because the gospel is meant to be heard by all peoples. The same Spirit who made the apostles intelligible in Jerusalem made the renewed Moravian Church restless for St Thomas, Greenland, South Africa, and many other places. The missionary century from 1732 to 1832 can therefore be read as an extended Pentecost theme in Moravian history: one gospel crossing languages, cultures, and oceans.

## The Pentecostal Movement

The early twentieth-century Pentecostal movement also looked back to Acts 2 as a defining scriptural pattern. Standard descriptions of Pentecostalism emphasise baptism in the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues, as central features of the movement's self-understanding. In that sense, Pentecostalism sought not only to remember Pentecost liturgically but to experience it again as a present reality in the life of the church.

The rise of Pentecostalism can be seen as a third reformation in Christianity. The idea arises from the fact Pentecostalism represents another major renewal current with global consequences. Its extraordinary growth in the twentieth century gave new prominence to themes of spiritual empowerment, lay testimony, healing, praise, and missionary energy.

However, the point of tongues in this Lukan narrative is not spectacle but the intelligible declaration of the wonders of God to those gathered from many nations. Pentecostal spirituality stands close to the deepest logic of Pentecost itself. In it we see a movement making Christ known across barriers of class, race, language, and geography.

For Moravians, then, Pentecost should be seen as a basis to work for reconciliation. Where divisions are emerging, even within the Moravian community, we can see Pentecost as a shared language of grace, and openness to the other. The anti-Babel moment of Acts 2, Herrnhut in 1727, and the later Pentecostal awakening all testify that the church is renewed when speech becomes hospitable to those who would otherwise remain outside.

Maybe the most urgent Pentecost lesson for the contemporary church in Britain and Ireland is a communication strategy centred on the priorities of the Gospel. In a fragmented society marked by inequality and contested identities, Christian witness has to move beyond correct doctrine spoken in an inaccessible tongue. The church is called to speak of Jesus in ways that can be heard, received, and trusted by those around us. Understood in this way, Pentecost is more than miraculous speech. It is also about the Spirit creating understanding and giving us the language and challenge to speak, so that all people can hear the gospel in ways that they can understand.

## Br Livingstone Thompson

Minister at Kilwarlin and University Road  
Moravian Churches, and Provincial Board



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## Sikonge Mission Hospital Update

Dear sisters and brothers in the UK, I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ. I hope this finds you all in good health and spirit.

Sikonge Mission Hospital continues to serve the population of Sikonge through blessings and challenges.

As you might know my family and I moved back to Denmark after nearly four years in Sikonge. But I am still working with the hospital through calls and video-meetings every week as well as visits three times a year. I was there in late January and will go there again in April.

I work with the leadership of the hospital that consists of doctor in charge Peter Songoro, hospital director pastor Wilson Nkumba, and our new nurse in charge Adam Ejide who got the position last summer. Adam is a young passionate nurse who worked in our maternity ward before. He is known for a rare combination of being warm and kind and at the same time not tolerating substandard treatment and not being afraid to speak up. He has turned out to be the right choice and has learned very fast about management through his experienced colleagues Dr Peter and pastor Wilson. Personally, I am very grateful that we now have a hospital leadership team that are all honest and hard-working with an unwavering focus on strengthening the hospital for the sake of the patients. It is uncommonly seen, strong and committed team.

The whole hospital leadership team asked me to send warm greetings and thank you for your support in funding as well as prayers. Both are equally important to us.

## Free services to the poor

The funds you sent for our exemption program have helped 5,540 women give birth or getting C-section for free in 2025, as well as giving many children free bed stay, and an even larger number of pregnant women and newborns free check-ups. It also helped us give individual exemption to 69 persons last year. Those 69 people are not part of the automatically exempted groups (mothers and children) but are extra vulnerable due to severe poverty or social problems. Our social worker screens them through a list of criteria making sure the funds

are used for those who need it the most. It is at the core of our hospital to be able to provide free treatment to the most vulnerable as part of our vision is to identify every life as a gift from God - including the poorest of the poor. We want to follow Jesus' example of caring for the poor and the outcasts society.

## HIV

We started the year with US Aid withdrawing all funds for HIV-work in practically all parts of Tanzania overnight. The staff in our HIV-department chose to work for free for more than a month knowing that their patients would be without any health service if they left. It is good example of committed health personnel. Last week the organisation leading the HIV-work (MDH, partner of US Aid) managed to get funds for February and March, so our staff just got paid. They also expect to get funds for April, May and June so for now it looks like the HIV work will continue. God has once again shown how he can work wonders.

## Current focus on improving health services

After years of working on building a strong administration with democratic decision-making and financial transparency, the hospital management is now focused on raising the quality of the health services. That is not done overnight, but we have taken some important steps in 2025.

An example is implementing the use of nursing care plans to strengthen the link between the doctors and nurses, and to make sure that there is a clear plan for each patient. An example of a nursing care plan could be a plan for a mother admitted after C-section: a medicine schedule, how often she needs her wound cleaned, and how often she needs to get up and move to help the body recover and so on.

Our main priority is mothers and children as these are the most vulnerable groups and make up the majority of our patients.

## Dreams for future development

In 2026 we dream of being able to renovate the maternity ward. The building where women give birth and the building where they stay with their

newborns afterwards are very run-down and have too little space. Currently three women give birth in one room at a time with only some fabric in between them. The windows face the main pass way in the hospital, so if the windows are opened, people can see right in the delivery room. There are no other windows, so the delivery room gets warm and lacks fresh air passing through.

After giving birth, they stay in a crowded ward - I have more than once seen two new mothers and their newborns sharing one bed.

Outside the ward we had a toilet and a bath which collapsed last week. We thank God that there was no one in there when it happened! This year has brought unusually heavy rainfalls, and it has taken its toll on many houses in Sikonge, and now also the maternity washroom.

For now, they use the washroom of the children's ward, but it is too far from the maternity ward for a newborn mother to go.

We managed to get some funds for renovating the maternity ward from a Danish local church, but it is far from enough. Our main challenge for now is therefore finding funds for building a new washroom and next renovating maternity department to give women a reasonable place to give birth with more privacy and better circulation of air. If you would like to hear more about this plan and see a breakdown budget, let me know. I am also happy to correspond with the youth organisation that was so kind as to collect money for the exemption program last year.

For now, we ask you to pray for us to succeed in improving the conditions of the maternity department, but we also encourage you to pray for the mothers that are birth in our facility every day. It means so much knowing that we have brothers and sisters praying for us and the patients that we serve.

I send warm greetings from Denmark as well as from my good colleagues in Tanzania!

## Sr Mia Toldam Korsgård

Long-distance missionary in Sikonge and head of programme

Moravian Mission Denmark

## Witnessing the installation of the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury on 25th March 2026 at Canterbury Cathedral



© Sr Roberta Hoey

It is always a real privilege to be at great state or national services, but these are usually solemn occasions. However, attending this service was not only a huge privilege but also a real joy. I was invited to the service as President of the Irish Council of Churches, and I was joined by Sr Roberta Hoey who was invited as Chair of the British Province of the Moravian Church.

The service was due to start at 3pm but we were to attend our robing areas from 12.30pm onwards and being conscientious guests, we did just that. We were assigned to Section G in the Crypt for robing. To our great delight so was almost everyone else except the Church of England bishops who must have been robing in another area.

We were with the Anglican primates from around the world including Archbishop John McDowell, the primate of the Church of Ireland, the Lutherans, Methodists, Salvation Army, many Orthodox Churches. Also in the Crypt, me included, were those representing the various ecumenical bodies in the British Isles. Great were the greetings as folk met up and chatted and new links made. Roberta and I broke free for a while and went to explore the rest of the crypt which is just fabulous with some newly discovered medieval wall paintings.

At 2pm the stewards and vergers attempted to get us all in our right groups ready to process into the Cathedral in the right order - no mean feat as there was a lot of chatting! We then processed into the cathedral via the beautiful cloisters, the West Door, the Nave past the Compass Rose and Nave altar, through the screen and then the choir stalls and were seated in the Presbytery which in cathedrals is the area beyond the choir but before the high altar.

The first hymn, 'Praise my soul the King of Heaven' was sung with gusto and then the mandate from the King, appointing the Most Reverent and Rt Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally DBE as Archbishop of Canterbury. The new archbishop then arrived at the West Door and knocked three times to ask for entry and a group of children from a local secondary school asked her three questions about who she was and what her intent was. 'I am Sarah, a servant of Jesus Christ and I come as one seeking the grace of God, to travel with you in his service together.' Was her response to the first question.

The service continued in the Nave with the Kyrie sung in Urdu, prayer and the declaration of assent and the oaths. Then the various Presidents of Churches Together in England gathered and invited Archbishop Sarah to sign the ecumenical covenant as one of the six Presidents of CTE. The Old Testament reading was read by the Archbishop of Westminster. This was followed by a wonderful African Choir, from Norfolk, who sang (and danced) the Gospel Acclamation in Swahili. The Gospel reading, Luke 1:26-38, was read in Spanish by a bishop from Mexico who was smiling broadly as she walked back to her place with the Primates.

The service then moved from the Compass Rose and Nave, through the screen into the Choir and beyond. The archbishop was installed in the throne of Canterbury Cathedral and was

presented with the Pastoral Staff. Archbishop Sarah was then installed in the Chair of St Augustine. This represents the Archbishop of Canterbury's position as worldwide spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion and she was then blessed by the senior primatial archbishop, (by length of service) Most Rev Albert Chama who prayed in Bemba. Generous applause then followed this installation.

The hymn, 'There's a wideness in God's mercy', followed and then we all sat for the archbishop's sermon. This was a well-crafted, clear and accessible declaration of her personal faith and her desire to serve her people following the model of Mary the mother of Jesus. 25th March is Lady Day, the day many Christians celebrate the annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary in Nazareth, so it was such an appropriate day to institute a woman and mother to this role. The sermon was wonderfully finished by an anthem sung by the choir based on the words of Mother Julian of Norwich.

We shared in our common faith together with the Nicene Creed without the filioque clause as a courtesy to the Orthodox bishops in the cathedral. Prayers were led by various significant people in the Canterbury diocese and then the archbishop led an act of commitment for all the people in the cathedral including those of other faiths.

The service ended with the last hymn 'Tell out my soul' and the blessing. There was then a totally unscripted second round of applause as the Archbishop's procession left the cathedral. Her procession then moved out to the Buttermarket in Canterbury to bless the city and the diocese and the rest of us processed back to the crypt. We were then invited to a reception in Shirley Hall hosted by the Archbishop of York.

The service itself had been simplified with fewer processions and updated language, and it felt warm. It was multilingual, multi-cultural and very colourful representing the nature of the Anglican communion and the great variety of Churches in the United Kingdom. The choir was made up not just of professional choristers but also young people from local schools. The music was stunning, a visceral experience, and the architecture amazing. Finally, a really important gesture, in my eyes anyway, was that the leaders of other faith communities were seated in the Presbytery opposite the ecumenical guests and that we were all included in the Act of Commitment.

I was just so pleased to attend and represent Churches in Ireland at such a lovely joy filled and hopeful occasion.

**Sr Sarah Groves**  
Bishop of the Unity

Niels Gärtner is a consultant for Herrnhuter Missionshilfe and chairman of the Förderverein 'Starmountain'. In January 2026, he visited the rehabilitation centre for children and young people with intellectual disabilities in Sternberg, located north of Ramallah.

What is life like in the West Bank now? I set off for Israel/Palestine at the beginning of January 2026 with this big question in mind. I actually know the region quite well. I have been travelling regularly in the northern West Bank for 10 years, mostly to Starmountain.

Starmountain is the rehabilitation centre of the worldwide Moravian Church for children and young people with intellectual or multiple disabilities. I am responsible for ecumenical contacts and Christian identity there.

Until now, I had been able to assess the situation there well, having travelled extensively in Ramallah and Jerusalem. I knew what life was like for many people on the Palestinian side. But then came the Hamas attack on Israel and the war in Gaza. And a great deal has changed in the West Bank too. But what?

During my last visit in May 2024, some things still seemed quite normal, apart from the catastrophic economic situation. The loss of jobs in Israel and the fact that the autonomous authority was no longer receiving any funds meant that there was great economic hardship. No income, no money for food, no going out, no investments. Many restaurants had closed, as had many shops. But there was still some life on the streets: people drove to the university in Birzeit, people went shopping, craftsmen continued to build houses.

In January 2026, the economic situation had not changed, but rather deteriorated. But the security situation had deteriorated enormously. While at the beginning of the Gaza war, the Israeli military mainly targeted refugee camps

where extremists were suspected, such as in Jenin, military control had spread throughout the West Bank. Many additional checkpoints have been reactivated or newly constructed. They severely restrict mobility and make travel within the West Bank unpredictable.

In addition, there are the open acts of violence committed by extremist Jewish settlers who attack Palestinians, destroy fields and gardens, steal livestock or set cars on fire. This often happens under the eyes of the Israeli military and is not prosecuted.



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'What can we do? We can't do anything! We just have to put up with it. This is our home', says one of Starmountain's employees, adding, 'These people want to drive us off our land'. Another employee says, 'I live on the outskirts of Ramallah and can drive to work at Starmountain every day. There are no roadblocks here. And otherwise, life is relatively normal.'

Starmountain itself keeps its doors open all the time. Every day, teachers, children and young people come to the green hill of Starmountain. They have something like everyday life, like routine, which is very important for children and young people with intellectual disabilities. When I see how much affection and joy the staff radiate, giving hope to others, I often ask myself: could I do that, given the political situation? I have great

## Life in the West Bank

respect for people who have to bear so much personally and yet are able to bring so much joy and hope.

Life in the West Bank is not the same everywhere and can vary greatly depending on the region. The Christian-influenced cities south of Jerusalem (Bethlehem, Bet Jala, Bet Sahour) are located directly on the wall and are therefore often affected by conflicts between border guards and Palestinians. Ramallah and the neighbouring towns and villages (north of Jerusalem) are densely populated, economically

prosperous and have so far been little affected by Israeli violence. I am glad that Starmountain is located in this relatively peaceful region.

The situation is different in Nablus or Jenin. A former colleague wrote to me from Nablus: 'We don't dare go out on the streets. We only go out when we have to, such as to go shopping. Something happens every day. When will this injustice end?' It is precisely the rural regions and villages, which are increasingly surrounded by Jewish settlements, that are experiencing the most violence.

Life in the West Bank - between a certain normality and brutal violence, but also an unpredictable legal vacuum. In the evening, many people are just glad to have survived another day.

With my German passport, I am able to leave a few days later without any problems. But I take the questions with me: how will things continue there? What kind of life is this under such conditions? How can the suffering of the people be stopped?

Peace and justice belong together - I know that from the Bible. A lawless area without justice, such as the West Bank is at present, cannot achieve peace.

**Br Niels Gärtner**



# 'What I Believe'

**Moravian Messenger Editor Sr Sarah Groves interviews Sr Hannah Coope**

### **What do you struggle with in your personal faith and what gives you strength and comfort?**

I struggle seeing people who are kind, loving and caring go through times of struggle, hardship and sadness. I struggle seeing people who are unkind, hateful and uncaring go through times of ease, happiness and elation. I feel like the world is unfair sometimes. What gives me strength and comfort is knowing God has experienced all of the above so although it is unfair God knows what that feels like and he is empathetic and sits in the struggle, hardship and sadness with you.

### **Have you ever been angry with God, and if so, why?**

Many times, but the first was when I was 18, my best friend's brother was knocked over by a driver who was messing about behind the wheel and he died. That day was the first day I remember thinking, why didn't you stop it God? You are all powerful, you can perform miracles, why didn't you?

### **How can the Church be more relevant to younger people and support them more?**

I ask this question frequently and then I come to the same conclusion, I don't know. People my age are either not interested, want to go to church to get their children into a good school or have questions about my beliefs. If I don't have a definite answer and respond with that's part of having a faith (believing in something you don't have proof for) they struggle. Therefore, I guess finding out how God and the church can enrich their lives, allowing people to be open and honest about why they come to church and creating a safe space where they can question, religion and faith is the way forward. I have remained in the church because my congregation is like a family to me, that is what I liked, and it made me feel supported. However, perhaps that isn't what other people would like.

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

Film: *About time* - reminds me to try and live in the present.

Book: *Pride and Prejudice* - reminds me how grateful I am that women now have rights and reminds me to not judge people and try to be humble.

Music: I like so many different songs, artists, genres of music that I can't possibly pick one. Black Eyed Peas - Where is the love? This was a song that really hit home for me the importance of love.

### **The place where you feel closest to God?**

I feel closest to God at church, surrounded by my church family who share the same belief in God as me. You pray, praise and learn about God, helping my faith to grow.

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

'Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle'. I try to carry this out every day and even when I don't, I would like it to be a reminder for those living long after me.

Sr Hannah is a member at Royton Moravian Church and is a Physical Education teacher at a nearby Secondary School.

### **Tell us a bit about your background, family, education etc**

I was born in Yorkshire and then moved at the age of three to Lancashire. I liked both but living most of my life in Lancashire has led me to be a Manchester United fan who loves a good brew (has to be Yorkshire tea though). I had a happy, loving upbringing with my parents and two brothers. I now live with my wonderful husband Mike, and my dog Max. Sport has always been a huge part of my life being on multiple sports teams when I was younger and now playing netball and running are key hobbies. I completed my GCSEs and A Levels and went on to study Sport and Coaching Studies, receiving a 1st class degree and an award for the highest score in the combined honours program, which I am extremely proud of. I completed a post-graduate certificate in education and have now been a teacher for 11 years.

### **How and when did you come to faith?**

I have always had a faith since birth as I was brought to church as a baby and have continued to attend. I have never not had faith but the moment I can recall knowing how important it was to me was when I decided to be confirmed which was at some point during my teenage years. I remember having the classes and thinking, yes this feels completely right and meaningful.

### **Tell us a bit about your vocation and life as a teacher**

I wanted to be a teacher as I recognised that I enjoyed working with young people, and I felt I was good at it but I also know the difference a good teacher can make in the lives of young people. I remember three teachers in particular, two of which were PE teachers, that made me feel seen, talented and not just another person on this planet. I wanted to do that for other young people, and what better way than teaching PE, something that I love.

### **You are younger than many folk in the Church - do you find that a challenge?**

No, I don't find it a challenge as I am no different than anyone else. We are all human beings, we are all valuable, and we are all equal. I find it sad that there may become a point where the church may not be here but all we can do is try and spread the word of God through kind actions and words.

## Report from the Lancashire District Conference Spring Meeting

The meeting was held on Zoom on the morning of 7th March. All three churches in the district were represented and Br Newman attended as the Provincial Board representative.

Minutes of the previous meeting in October 2025 were agreed, and the election of officers was then held, the appointments being as follows: Chair Sr Janet Warr; Secretary Sr Margery Sutcliffe; and Messenger correspondent Sr Margery Sutcliffe. No District Youth and Children's coordinator was appointed.

During the matters arising it was confirmed that Sr Joy Raynor is continuing as Safeguarding Officer, but the role of Children's officer is to be replaced by regional officers. The first of these appointments will be for the Northern Region and will cover Lancashire and Yorkshire Districts. The ministers in those regions have already held a meeting to discuss the role and how it will work, it is anticipated that recruitment for the role will start in June this year. Their next meeting will be on 9th May and before that meeting each congregation will need to consider whether they are willing to support the work and if so, supply names of the congregation members willing to

be involved. Congregations will also need to decide in the future what projects they wish to pursue and then apply for provincial funding for those projects.

The proposed visits by board members to all congregations has commenced but visits to larger congregations i.e. those with over 25 members, are expected to be towards the end of 2026.

The district gathering will take place on 28th June at Fairfield and Br Woolford will lead the service.

Progress is being made on the Natural Church Development project and Fairfield and Dukinfield are about to launch their second surveys and Royton have now started their first. It was noted that nationally whilst some congregations had experienced growth overall membership numbers have stayed the same. Dukinfield reported that they had seen some growth but felt it was impossible to know whether this was as a direct result of the NCD project.

During Br Newman's report from the Provincial Board, he mentioned that calls to service were expected in the summer; necessitated by retirements and changes to roles following Synod elections. Forms

for Deputies to Synod are to be submitted by the end of April and any proposals that affect the Book of Order must be submitted by 10th April and all other proposals by 21st May. It was noted that three board members are not standing for re-election and there then followed a discussion about board members and the roles they fill and the possible need for a change to those roles. There was also a suggestion that the restrictions on the length of time someone could serve on the board need to be removed. Br Michael pointed out that any such change would require a proposal from a congregation for Synod to consider.

Lancashire district will hold a pre-Synod meeting at 7pm on 29th June at Fairfield. LDC was pleased to endorse Sr Penny Weir to the board for entry to the list of Lay Preachers.

At the close of business Br Woolford offered a vote of thanks to Br Gubi on behalf of the LDC for his years of service and wisdom to the Lancashire district.

The next meeting of LDC will be held on 10th October 2026.

**Sr Margery Sutcliffe**  
LDC Correspondent

## Report of the Midlands District Conference held on 14th February

The Midlands District Conference comprised of members from Leominster, Leicester, Ockbrook and Hall Green gathered online in February to share news, encouragement, and hopes for the year ahead. The meeting opened with the Daily Texts and prayer, and members also paused to remember Sr DeYoung with gratitude for her life and the energy she brought to her congregation.

Elections were held during the meeting, with Br Smith (Ockbrook) taking on the role of Chair and Sr Henry (Leicester) serving as Vice-Chair. Members also received an update from the Provincial

Board and were encouraged to continue holding its work in prayer.

Reports from congregations reflected a lively and varied church life across the district. Churches shared news of outreach events, music and cultural celebrations, fellowship gatherings, and growing connections with their local communities. Several congregations also spoke about the joy of welcoming children and younger families, while continuing to explore ways of strengthening youth work.

Plans are already taking shape for the visit of the Moravian Brass band later in

the year, with community events and opportunities for fellowship being developed across the district.

Alongside these encouraging signs, congregations also shared some ongoing challenges, including financial pressures, building maintenance, and the need for volunteers and technical skills. These were noted as matters for continued prayer and mutual support.

The meeting closed with devotions and a shared sense of gratitude for the fellowship of Moravian churches across the Midlands.

**Br Phill Battelle**  
Ockbrook

*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, including the following one. Please contact the committees or the Provincial Board if you would like to know further details about their work.*

### **Finance and Property Committee**

The British Province is seeking new members to serve on its Finance and Property Committee from Synod 2026. There are at least three positions to elect.

This Committee supports the stewardship of the Church's financial resources and buildings, advising the Provincial Board and Synod on matters such as major property decisions, financial planning, and support for congregations. It also administers the Church Extension (Loan) Fund, which helps congregations with loans for churches, manses, and related buildings.

You do not need to be an expert in both finance and property. **We are looking for people with a range of skills and experience - financial, property-related, governance, or simply a willingness to engage thoughtfully and serve**

**collaboratively.** A commitment to the life and mission of the Moravian Church is essential and you must be a member of the Moravian Church in the British Province.

Members are elected by Synod for a four-year term, with meetings held during the inter-synodal period (a mix of online and in-person).

If you feel you may have something to offer, or would like to find out more, please contact livingstone.thompson@moravian.org.uk or any Provincial Board member. All enquiries will be treated confidentially.

## Fetter Lane, London

### Artists in residence at Moravian Close

Chelsea is renowned as a magnet for artists of all categories and Moravian Close has been and still is a part of that scene. Ernest and Mary Gillick, two prominent 20th century sculptors, made Moravian Close their home and workplace from 1914 until 1965 when Mary died, (Ernest, her husband, died in 1951). In 1952 Mary Gillick famously won the competition for the design of the late Queen's effigy on our coinage, with the first coins issued in 1953 to coincide with the coronation. Her husband Ernest is known for his large public art including the Glasgow Cenotaph lions. And much of their work was produced at Moravian Close, in a room which is now well used by local community groups.

Historian and friend of the Moravian congregation, Ian Foster, arranged for a brass plaque to be fashioned, commemorating the Gillicks. The plaque was donated by the Royal Mint, and the lead designer was Lee R. Jones. At the end of March, the Fetter Lane Heritage and Ecology working group organised an event to unveil the plaque, mounted on the wall where the sculptors



© Ian Foster

worked. We were especially delighted to welcome two great nieces of the Gillicks, Catherine Smith and Julie Stacey who did the honours of pulling the curtain aside. As well as a brief history delivered by Ian, we heard from Philip Attwood, former keeper of coins and medals at the British Museum. The Gillicks also worked on a number of medals commemorating national events.

The event attracted around 40 people, some with connections to the Gillicks and others simply interested in the varied history of this inspiring and amazing space.

**Sr Cynthia Dize**

## Horton, Yorkshire

After a very wet, windy and cold winter here in Yorkshire we are now seeing signs of spring with longer lighter nights, a little sunshine here and there and beautiful spring flowers.

Following a busy Christmas period, we started 2026 with our various Bible Studies, Women's Fellowship meetings, World Day of Prayer, Churches Together coffee mornings and social events.

Sr Liz Wood (kindly and very ably - thank you) led our Mother's Day service which was filled with wonderful activities and reflections about togetherness, growing and family. We decorated leaves to hang on two 'trees' - one was 'Our Church Family Tree', and the other was 'Our Mothers Love and Guidance Tree'. These are now on display to remind us that we are all family in one way or another, and we are so thankful for all the love and support we receive from each other.

From all of us at Horton we extend our best wishes to all of you and hope you also experience fellowship, support and love for each other.

**Sr Linda Barraclough**



© Sr Linda Barraclough

## Swindon, Wiltshire

### Goodbye, Dixon Street (1899-2025). Hello, Pilgrim Centre.

It has been a while since our last news item, a period sadly in which the congregation took the decision to sell the buildings in Dixon Street which had been our home since 1899. Fortunately, our premises were the highlight of the auction and sustained bidding drove the hammer price up, with a Pentecostal Church taking ownership, so it will continue in service to the Lord.

We removed the noticeboards from either side of the entrance doors placing them in storage with items we had retained, said our goodbyes and in October last year began worshipping and holding MWA (Moravian Women's Association), Congregation Committee and Bible Study meetings in a generous member's home (thank you Sr Glenice). However, as that meant we could not invite new people to join us we began the hunt for a public worship venue. Options were surprising limited with three local



© Br Neil Pithouse

community centres unable to accommodate us. It finally came down to a choice between an afternoon slot in The Friends Meeting House or use of an 'upper room' in the morning at Central Church's building while they worship in their own Sanctuary. The congregation decided to accept Central Church's offer, and we began worship on the second floor of The Pilgrim Centre, Regent Circus in April.

Services will continue to be held on the second and fourth Sundays in the month. We hope that this goes well and pray that we will be blessed with growth so that we may one day have our own building again.

**Br Neil Pithouse**

## CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

### Adult Baptism by Immersion

5th Oct 2025 David Craig Reid University Road

### Received into Memberships

22nd Feb 2026 Linda Wood Gomersal  
22nd Feb 2026 Ken Wood Gomersal

### Deaths

23rd Dec 2025 Anne Gilmore (née Trimble) University Road  
2nd March 2026 Annie Speers (née Boyd) University Road  
25th March 2026 David Kernohan University Road

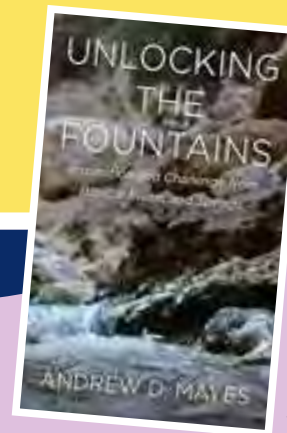
## FROM CHURCH HOUSE

### Provincial Diary for May

4-7 Minister and Lay Worker Retreat High Leigh Conference Centre  
14-18 European Women's Conference High Leigh Conference Centre  
19-20 Provincial Board Meeting Church House  
21 Deadline for 'B' Proposals, Reports and Memorials for Synod to Provincial Board

## DATES TO REMEMBER

- 3 Beginning of Watchwords in Herrnhut 1728
- 10-16 Christian Aid Week ([www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk))
- 12 The signing of the Brotherly Agreement which marked the Renewal of the Unitas Fratrum at Herrnhut, Saxony, 1727
- 14 Ascension Day
- 21 Shavuot - Jewish
- 24 Pentecost
- 25 Whit Monday
- 26 Eid-ul-Adha - Muslim
- 31 Trinity Sunday



## BOOK REVIEW

### Unlocking the Fountains: Inspiration and Challenge from Biblical Rivers and Springs

(Resource Publications, 2025) by Andrew D Mayes.

ISBN: 979-8385262229  
Justice, reconciliation, peace and environmental problems are very much to the fore now, and water is often central to the issues which need to be addressed both spiritually and physically.

This book does that, using specific places in the Holy Land, aiming at fulfilling spiritual needs for further discovery, relating ecology and spirituality and providing resources for further reading in classic spiritual writers. Andrew Mayes is well qualified to do this from his personal experience of the places, also well researched, as a spiritual guide, and his knowledge of the literature and his concerns with environmental and humanitarian issues, all of which are firmly based on the Bible.

The book is structured in such a way that it is easy to use, both for individuals and for preachers, teachers and leaders of adult groups. Part One deals with specific rivers mentioned in the Bible and Part Two with wells and springs. The main headings are in bold type, with subheadings just in slightly larger print, which is helpful.

Each chapter begins with the geography of the river and its meaning, the challenges and suffering facing the present inhabitants, and continues with the main story from the Bible and the characters involved. The themes are then illustrated with reference to classic writers. At the end are five questions for reflection relating to these themes, leading to further engagement and action. I thoroughly recommend this book to all who thirst for the living water. I found it inspiring.

**Sr Dilys Howard**

## NOTICES

## 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](mailto: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.

## THE GATHERED STREAM

**Online Every Tuesday**  
(except the month of August)

**12th May 2026 - A New Course begins**  
**7.30pm-8.30pm**

**A House Group of Gathered Moravians**  
led by Sr. Lorraine Shorten, Br. James Woolford,  
Sr. Sue Groves & Sr. Claire Maxwell

Email [james.woolford@moravian.org.uk](mailto:james.woolford@moravian.org.uk)  
for Zoom details

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays: Bible Study**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays: Worship**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays: Recap and Refresh Week**

BRITISH PROVINCE CHARITY NUMBER: 251211

# What the Good Samaritan did next



The parable of the Good Samaritan has a number of strengths. It is short and punchy; it strikes an immediate chord with people of all faiths and none; it gives the reader a clear instruction - 'Go you and do likewise'; and it appears in only one gospel (so avoiding any confusion between different versions). If there were a 'top ten' for parables, then there's no doubt the Good Samaritan would be in it.

Yet I have always found it unsatisfactory because of the way it ends. What is usually presented as the happy ending, all problems solved, seems to me in fact to leave a whole spate of other, difficult questions.

You will recall that after giving first aid, the Good Samaritan took the victim to an inn "and did what he could for him. Next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the words 'Look after him, will you? I will pay you back whatever more you spend when I come through here on my return.'"

So, at the end of Luke's account, the victim appears to be safe and with his future needs provided for.

But what happens if the Good Samaritan does not in fact return? Throughout the story he behaves in an exemplary, almost other worldly way, so we must assume that he will return if he can. However, that might be outside his control - what happens if business or family concerns mean he has to change his plans or, indeed, if he himself is set upon and attacked? In those circumstances, the victim presumably stays at the inn until the two pieces of silver are used up and then he is out on the street and fending for himself again. While the parable might seem to leave him in a good place, in reality it makes him entirely dependent on the charity of one individual and that is not a secure arrangement.

The more likely scenario, of course, is that the Good Samaritan does return as expected. He settles up with the innkeeper and, presumably, he and the victim will then make the uphill journey back to Jerusalem together, so that the victim returns to his family safe and sound.

But where does that leave the victim? He has still lost his clothes and whatever else the bandits took from him, and he now faces some difficult choices about future trips. Does he avoid Jericho from now on? Does he stay at home and not go anywhere? Does he only travel about in large groups? If he modifies his actions in any of those ways, then you could say that the bandits have 'won'.

What about the Good Samaritan himself? He may be the strong person in the story, but we still need to see things through his eyes. Does he too avoid the Jericho road in future or, conversely, does he actively wander around looking for people to help? What happens when his time and money run out? Perhaps two pieces of silver don't really matter to him. Even so, if he ends up helping people on a monthly/weekly/daily basis he will presumably feel the pinch eventually.

Without getting side-tracked there is also the question of where his money is coming from - this must be one of very few examples in the New Testament where being wealthy is seen as a good thing, rather than cause for suspicion. I guess we just have to accept that the money has been acquired fairly and ethically.

Perhaps most important of all, what about the people who aren't in the story. How does the parable help people who took the Jericho road the day before or after this incident, or were on other journeys, when the Good Samaritan didn't happen to be present?

It seems to me that the parable only makes sense if it is read on two different levels. The first level is that, when we encounter human suffering, we should do all we can to relieve it regardless of who the sufferer is or where we found them. That is the correct emotional response, it is what the parable so gloriously describes, and it is why it has had such resonance down the centuries.

But human beings are not just emotional creatures, we have a head as well as a heart. And the second level of the parable, perhaps hidden between the lines, is to invite us to think about how we can ensure that everyone gets the help they need, not just those who happen to be in the right place at the right time.

I would like to think that when the Good Samaritan reflects on his experience, he will naturally be pleased about the role he played but he will also conclude that a fair society cannot rely solely on random acts of kindness. Which will lead him to think about what he, and his wider community, can do to ensure that all travellers can journey in safety and get help when they need it. And that remains the challenge for us.

To quote Martin Luther King:

*'On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will only be an initial Act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed'.*

**Br John Kilner**

*Bath Coronation Avenue*

## 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](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/hurricanemelissaappeal)

### The Moravian Messenger

Official Journal of the Moravian Church in the British Province. Published monthly by the authority of the Provincial Synod.

**Advertisements and all communications concerning distribution and supply should be sent to the Editorial Team.**

**Editorial Team**, Church House, 5 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TJ  
[editorialteam@moravian.org.uk](mailto:editorialteam@moravian.org.uk)

Contributions for the Messenger should reach the editorial team by the 7th day of the preceding month.

### Design & Artwork

**David Bull**

[dave@davebull.co.uk](mailto:dave@davebull.co.uk)

### Printing & Distribution

**G. R. Walkden**

Tel 01253 681338