

The **Moravian Church**, led by Count Zinzendorf [1700-1760], began in 1734 a mission work that was to have profound effects throughout the Christian world. They were noted for their prayerful, patient approach as 'assistants to the Holy Spirit'.

Their German home base was called Herrnhut [the Lord's watch], famous for being the centre for over 100 years of 'Prayer Wall'; 24 hour, 7 day a week prayer.

Sixty years before Carey went to India and over 100 years before Hudson Taylor went to China, two Moravian missionaries landed in the Caribbean. Twenty years later in 1752, Moravians were in Algeria, Sri Lanka, China, Iran, Ethiopia and Labrador.

The Moravians were weak in developing leaders, planting churches and their missionaries short on adequate preparation. They had some 'different' theological perspectives. If you met them today you might choose to write them off but perhaps this quote sums up what we can learn from them:

"The Moravian Church was the first among Protestant churches to treat this (missionary) work as the responsibility of the church as a whole instead of leaving it to societies or specially interested people." J.R.Weinlick.

Moravian missionaries were purposely sent to the most despised and neglected people and like many missionaries since, faced disease and possible death. In Guyana, 75 out of the first 160 missionaries died from tropical disease. A line from a hymn written by a Greenland missionary expressed their heart:

"Lo through ice and snow, one poor lost soul for Christ to gain; Glad we bear want and distress to set forth the Lamb once slain".

Their missionary obedience was essentially glad and spontaneous, motivated by a deep passion and love for Christ. This led them to face the most incredible difficulties and dangers with remarkable courage.

ROOTS AND SHOOTS!

This is the theme of this series of simple leaflets that we have prepared to further strengthen the rising tide of prayer and action in Carey's Patch.

Today, we are praying in faith for a move of God in our communities and churches tomorrow! How many of us realise or know of the ways and the people through whom God has moved in this area's yesterdays?

*"Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham" Gen 26v18
What God has done before, He can do again.*

We want to celebrate our heritage in Him by reflecting on the impact made on society in past generations through the translators, hymn-writers, teachers and emancipators raised up in this area.

Written by various local Christians with knowledge of their subject, these leaflets will remind us of what God has raised up in Carey's Patch through faithful servants in previous generations.

These leaflets are made freely available to the Body of Christ.

7/00 **Written by: John Lawes**

Edited and Published by:

Centre for the Nations

P0 Box 6220, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 3YU, U.K.

Tel/Fax: (+44) 1933-223454

E-mail: ebcftn@lineone.net

Nations Trust

*a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales No. 3505690
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ROOTS AND SHOOTS!



No: 3 THE MORAVIANS

*One of a series of leaflets
highlighting our local Christian
heritage*



WELLINGBOROUGH

A NETWORK OF INDIGENOUS MISSION MOVEMENTS

Thank God for the Moravians!

.....Who?Why?

Carey.....Doddridge.....Arnold.....
all men that God used to extend His Kingdom in Northampton and beyond and who had been influenced by a group of believers based in Germany, led by Count Zinzendorf.

As a community, they committed themselves to pray twenty-four hours a day for every day of the year for the evangelisation of the world and this continued for over 100 years. To reach slaves, two became slaves so that “the Lamb might receive the reward of His sufferings.”

No wonder Carey quoted from their reports to reinforce his case for modern missions to be initiated, in the meeting at Kettering in 1792.

Doddridge corresponded with the Moravians regularly. When his daughter was seriously ill a member of the Moravians came and prayed for her healing and the Lord restored her to Doddridge’s delight. He had seen members of his church joining the Moravian congregation because of the ‘life’ there. Thomas Arnold of Castle Hill was born into a Moravian family and was noted for his ministry to deaf mutes in the town, as well as his preaching.

The Moravians exerted an influence out of all proportion to their numbers and were ‘salt and light’ in Northampton. They preached to the prisoners in the County gaol in the town, where up to 200 prisoners were kept and there are records of 1,500 hearing the gospel in the yard of the gaol (total population of Northampton at that time, the 1780’s, was about 10,000). They

found acceptance because of their charitable work and the influential citizens of the town, such as Mr Thursby of Abington (Thursby Road) invited them into their homes.

They sought to be self-supporting; creating businesses that not only supported them but brought them into intimate contact with people. If the circumstances did not allow this then other Moravian communal settlements with their crafts and industries would support them out of their profits.

Local Moravians were helped financially by the large Moravian Community in Bedford which also sent over preachers who helped found churches in Woodford Halse, Culworth and Eydon in the west of the county. Their lively singing attracted people to their meetings which were held, from 1769, in their church building at 11 St Giles Street (now under the Town Hall extension). They also had a school.

Their mission was evangelism across the world — “we do not wish to draw people away from their own churches but to preach with the divine promised presence the common salvation of lost sinners through the blood of the Son of God”. It was rooted in prayer and evidenced in ‘doing good’ without regard to denomination.

It is little wonder that God used them in challenging Wesley — who was going to evangelise in America before being converted himself. “I went to America to convert the Indians but oh! who shall convert me?” In 1738 the gospel was preached to John Wesley at the Moravian Church in Fetter Lane, London. The famous entry in his journal records: *‘I felt my heart strangely warmed, / felt I did trust in*

Christ, Christ alone for salvation and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.’

The Countess of Huntingdon, another prominent Christian who financed preachers and churches in the eighteenth century was also brought to Christ through Moravians. What is the significance of these people who received public thanks, from the mayor and other prominent people for their works in the town?

- They were rooted in prayer.
- Christ was their focus and goal.
- They recognised God’s heart for the world and were therefore mission minded.
- They showed the gospel went hand in hand with ‘doing good’.
- Young people were taught the Bible systematically.
- They sought fellowship with all who loved the Lord and His Word.
- They demonstrated life in their worship.

They were just one group of Christians in late eighteenth century Northampton that acted as a catalyst for change.

God’s principles do not change, though congregations come and go.

He honours dependency on Himself!