

A Memorabilia of 2012

In surveying material for this Memorabilia of “things worthy of remembrance” for 2012, we can marvel that in contrast to the many tragedies and issues of the world at large, the deeds and accomplishments of our “little” Moravian Church shine forth as beacons of encouragement and uplift. Yes, we have our shortcomings, but let’s recall just some of the accomplishments of the Southern Province this year.

Much of the activity on the Provincial level has been a further settling in to the new administrative structure as called for by our 2009 special Synod and 2010 regular Synod. Gone are the old Board of Christian Education and Board of Evangelism and Home Missions. In their stead is the **Board of Cooperative Ministries**, which last July installed Ruth Cole Burcaw as director. With its staff team in place, the Board has adopted many projects, activities, and events to live out its mission to “engage and support congregations and Regional Conferences in their ministries as together we grow in faith, love, and hope, following Jesus in serving the world.” Sr. Burcaw reports that the Board of Cooperative Ministries is looking forward to 2013 with “even more opportunities to build, connect, and mobilize Moravians to live out our faith!” You go, girl!

Our **Regional Conferences of Churches** have for the most part enlarged their combined services and missions. The Regional Conferences were a focus of the Intersynodal Gathering last April 27-28 when **Friedland** was host to more than 200 from eight of our 10 fellowships and 50 of our 56 congregations. Earlier in the year, on February 19, PEC president David Guthrie gave a PowerPoint presentation to the **North Branch Conference** of **Bethania, Mizpah, Olivet, and Rural Hall**, and it was noted: “This was the first time the PEC did a presentation at an RCC event.” We especially liked **Mount Ararat Regional Conference**’s report that **Crooked Oak** was host to **Grace, King, Mount Bethel, Willow Hill, and Mountain Laurel** Fellowship for a “cowbell revival” of more than two hours of preaching, praying, and singing plus a grand potluck supper. The “cowbell” gets rung to call the next preacher to the pulpit.

Laurel Ridge, the Southern Province’s jewel in the North Carolina mountains, had yet another splendid year with 481 summer campers, 181 mission campers, and 142 summer camp counselors. More than 100 volunteers helped improve the facilities, and literally hundreds enjoyed Higgins Lodge for retreats, conferences, and spiritual renewal. The “Adopt-A-Cabin” campaign has been a big hit with the churches, and has aided in reroofing all four lodges and refinishing floors in all cabins and lodges with only Laurel left to be done. Over the last 10 years the “Growing for a Lifetime” and “Feed My Sheep” capital campaigns have raised more than \$2.8 million, which has made possible the expansion of Higgins Lodge in 2007 and renovation and dedication of the summer camp kitchen this year.

Indeed, numerous conferences, meetings, and retreats filled our Moravian calendar in 2012. The **Moravian Music Foundation**’s second annual Moravian Music Weekend at Laurel Ridge March 9-11 featured among other things a tuba-serpent duet (that’s the snaky-looking instrument, not the slithery live thing), a talent show, serenading volunteers working on the summer cabins, and of course “lots of music-making!” Laurel Ridge was host to the third annual Moravian Conference on Environmental Stewardship on March 23-25, helping us to take better care of nature, God’s gift to us. The **Provincial Women’s Board** sponsored the Spiritual Life Retreat at Laurel Ridge on April 13-15, showing that the spiritual seeds of faith, love, and hope that have sustained us in the past assuredly are our response to the future.

As a truly worldwide Church, we Moravians celebrate our cultural diversity which now stretches from Nepal in the Himalayas to Peru in the Andes. In the Southern Province in 2012 we shared our diversity with the third annual Latino Ministries Conference, held March 10 at **First Moravian** in Georgia. Then again on the traditional third Sunday of October (the 21st this year), the **Florida District**, consisting of six churches (**King of Kings, New Hope, Prince of Peace, Palm Beach, Rolling Hills**, and

First, Georgia) and six fellowships (**Margate**, **New Covenant**, **Nueva Esperanza**, **Suriname**, **Rayaka Ingnika**, and **Tampa**) held the annual Harvest Festival. Palm Beach was host congregation, and tables were overflowing with produce, baked goods, and handmade items. Proceeds from the sale following worship are donated each year to a Moravian mission, so the more than \$2,000 raised at this year's Harvest Festival went to Moravian churches and fellowships in Cuba.

Our growing Cuba Unity Mission Area, which began in 1997, has eight churches, 12 fellowships, and about 330 total members. The Southern Province is in partnership with the Cuba Unity Mission Area, and the Board of World Mission is coordinating the partnership. Official recognition by the Cuban government will open greater opportunities for the Moravian Church in the island nation.

Yes, opportunities for mission abound in our mission-minded Moravian Church: Sierra Madre, Labrador, Tanzania and Zambia, Honduras — or right in our own hometowns. In Southside Winston-Salem a dedicated band of Christians, not just Moravians, has transformed **Trinity's** parsonage into a "home base" for those in need. Food, shelter, activities, and worship are offered under the name of **Anthony's Plot**. Sounds delightfully subversive. And it is. It's named for Anthony Ulrich, the freed slave who asked Count Zinzendorf to send missionaries to his family on St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, thus beginning the mission work of the Moravian Church in 1732. For daring to ask — and answer — such questions as, Are we willing to share our lives and resources with those less fortunate, Br. Russ May, Moravian minister of Anthony's Plot, received the Martin Luther King Jr. "Young Dreamer" Award last January from the Winston-Salem City Council.

Yet another "hometown" mission opportunity of the Moravian Church is **Sunnyside Ministry**. In a country as rich and blessed as we are, it is positively shameful that Sunnyside has had another banner year of assisting those in need. The numbers are staggering: 7,500 interviews with clients seeking assistance with rent or mortgages, utilities, food, and clothing; \$500,000 in financial assistance to 2,700 families; 6,000 grocery orders to provide a few days worth of meals for 17,000; clothing for 14,000. On the good side: the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust committed to a three-year grant totaling \$356,499; Duke Energy made a grant for three new commercial freezers; 14 youngsters received Sunnyside scholarships to attend college; Sunnyside continued to operate the oldest free medical clinic in Forsyth County at **Trinity**; and most important, Director Tommy Cole reports, "In our over 35 year history we have never had to turn down a request for assistance because we were out of funding, food, or clothing." All that is made possible thanks to the hundreds of volunteers and donors like you. Sunnyside remains the one agency of the Southern Province we would love to see put out of business for lack of need. Meanwhile, our generous assistance is greatly appreciated by those who receive it.

One sad mission note: Last July, because increasing costs depleted reserves and ability to respond to other disaster needs, the Board of World Mission closed its work in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. In response to the devastation of hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the Board of World Mission purchased a damaged house in Ocean Springs in January 2006 for fixing up and serving as a home base for disaster relief. More than 65 congregations from the Northern and Southern Provinces answered the call by sending more than 300 volunteer teams, some returning several times, to work on Katrina projects. The house also provided lodging for other churches working in the area, and about \$500,000 was raised and spent on Katrina relief. Now, though much remains to be done on the Gulf Coast, other opportunities will surely open — such as hurricane Sandy in the New York area — where we can again serve.

It isn't often one's ship comes in to landlocked Winston-Salem. The last time that occurred the *Queen Mary* docked in the Yadkin River, as reported by the local newspaper one April 1. But just this month the **Moravian Music Foundation** received notice of a bequest from the late Louise Nippert of Cincinnati, Ohio, totaling over \$1 million. No April Fooling. Was MMF director Nola Reed Knouse giddy? Floored? Naw. (Pick her up, someone.)

It seems that way back in 1947 — now listen up; this is a great Christmas story — the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra took a flyer by becoming the first major American symphony to hire an American-born and trained conductor. That conductor just so happened to be Thor Johnson, son of a Moravian minister and champion of Moravian music. It was Thor Johnson who spearheaded the very first Moravian Music Festival in Bethlehem in 1950. And he conducted every Moravian Music Festival since until his death in 1975. Thor Johnson also helped establish the Moravian Music Foundation in 1956.

It also just so happened that one of Br. Johnson's soloists and a long-time substantial supporter of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra was Mrs. Nippert, whose husband was an heir of the Procter & Gamble soap company fortune.

Evidently Br. Johnson's enthusiasm for Moravian music rubbed off on Mrs. Nippert, for when she died last July, she left a small portion of her late husband's fortune — over \$1 million in value — to the Moravian Music Foundation.

You see what good seeds we can plant that more than half a century later can miraculously blossom?

The result is a handsome nest egg for the Moravian Music Foundation, not only assuring for the future, but providing for concerts, outreach, programs, research, etc. Stay tuned for more to come from Sr. Knouse and the Moravian Music Foundation.

One thing to come in 2013 will be the Moravian Music Festival — the 24th since Br. Johnson conducted the first — in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, next July 14-20. The music is just about ready; registration forms have been mailed to some 3,300 households and churches; and plans are for a bus from Winston-Salem. So hop aboard for a solid week of Moravian music — making it, hearing it, loving it.

For its part in the ongoing study and enjoyment of Moravian history and heritage, **Moravian Archives** is charging along with more *Records of the Moravians among the Cherokees*. Already we have published volume 4, and soon volume 5 will chronicle the death of America's "universal woman," Anna Rosina Kliest Gambold. *Moravians: Cherokees* is great history, truly America's "great epic." If you don't have your copies, Moravian Archives will be happy to provide them.

No Memorabilia of a year's events would be complete without a survey of activities and accomplishments of our churches, the work engines of the Southern Province. In keeping with our rather subdued economy, no major church constructions were announced or begun in 2012. Rather, a number of needed repairs and improvements were attended to. Perhaps the largest was at **Friedberg**, where a \$200,000 project was announced to install an elevator, add restrooms, and build a canopy by the educational building.

Several projects were necessary or smart moves. For protection from rain, **Hopewell** is adding porch roofs at the three entrances of its new (2011) Christian Life Center that don't have that protection. **Mayodan's** fellowship hall was flooded when a gutter overflowed, and then the heat pump had to be replaced when the old one "gave up the battle and just died." **Union Cross** lost its air conditioners to thieves and had to replace them. Yes, we can attend church at **Covenant** in Wilmington in July and be perfectly comfortable, thanks to the new air conditioner. Mindful of being good stewards, **Messiah** switched out old light fixtures, air conditioners, and toilets for new, more efficient ones. Meanwhile, **Clemmons** aims to keep its new (2010) Christian education building running smoothly with quarterly maintenance service on its many HVAC units, including 12 heat pumps, 10 gas furnaces, two air handlers, two air conditioners, and one gas boiler for just the Christian education building alone. And keeping pace with the future, **Leaksville** installed Wi-Fi in its office to access the Internet.

In keeping with our improving (we pray) economy, a number of churches reported improved finances and attendance. **Moravia** saw a jump of 29 percent (wow!) in average attendance last February over the previous year. **Fairview** noted \$36,818.29 in revenue over expenses for the first two months of the year and \$30,074.08 revenue over expenses going into the final two months of the year. Last year's Christmas Lovefeast & Candlelight Service at **Union Cross** was so well attended that thoughts were given to

adding a second service. That didn't happen this year, but let's hope the need arises soon. **Friedberg** fell \$1,000 shy of its mission support in 2011, so did it cut back its commitment this year? No way. Instead, Friedberg increased the budget by \$500 for a total of \$37,240.

Often we Moravians worship our Chief Elder by special events or celebrating milestones, and 2012 had its share of them. **Mount Bethel** observed its 160th anniversary on November 24 and prepared for it by raising \$5,000 in just two weeks time to refinish the sanctuary floor. Memory of the event will certainly shine forth for years to come. **Oak Grove** celebrated its 125th anniversary on September 23. Actually, Oak Grove spent the whole year celebrating its anniversary with a Heritage Night, six young people joining the church on Palm Sunday, dedication of a new arch and fence around God's Acre and a brick prayer garden, a Fourth of July picnic, an old-fashioned lawn and birthday party, and Oak Grove history moments shared the first Sunday of each month. **Trinity** likewise celebrated its 100th anniversary throughout 2012. The celebrating began with a huge centennial banner unveiled last New Year's Eve, just in time for the Watchnight Service to usher in the centennial year. Special centennial events and items included concerts, a commemorative throw rug, a brick prayer garden, visits from former pastors, and sharing historical pictures and accounts. Trinity's celebrating culminated on July 15 when more than 350 worshipers packed the sanctuary for the centennial service, then filed outdoors to pose for a picture reminiscent of a panoramic photograph of Trinity's members taken in the 1920s.

Also in 2012 **Salemtowne** Retirement Community celebrated its 40 years of service to older adults with, among other events, publication of a history of its heritage of service stretching back to the Salem Home, which opened in 1887.

One anniversary had a note of sadness. On September 28, exactly one hundred years and five months after it was laid, the cornerstone of the old **Immanuel** church was opened and its contents were carefully deposited in the **Moravian Archives**: names of Sunday school teachers and scholars, a Bible, Moravian hymnal, the church newspaper, and the local *Journal-Sentinel* papers with news about the *Titanic's* sinking. The old Immanuel building is now an outreach of Calvary Baptist Church. Immanuel congregation joined with **New Eden** on October 7, 2002, and this year celebrates the 10th anniversary of **Immanuel New Eden** Moravian Church.

And of course there was the second Moravian Festival September 8, with **New Philadelphia** again graciously serving as host. It was a tremendous success, just as big as the first Moravian Festival in 2011, maybe bigger. From food to displays to educational exhibits and outreach opportunities to Moravian arts and crafts for sale — all of it was wonderful and proved that, yes, we Moravians can put on a big show. Then to top it all off the festival ended with a spectacular sound and light show, all of it free and provided by a passing thunderstorm.

Concluding this Memorabilia of 2012 we ask forgiveness for the many omissions in this event- and service-packed year, and we end with two historical notes. First, among those who are now in the more immediate presence of our Lord and Savior is Br. Cedric Rodney, who died November 20. He was the first ordained minister of African heritage to serve in the Southern Province. His funeral was the first for one of African heritage in **Home** Church since Sr. Phebe on August 25, 1861, one of the first three members of **St. Philips**, stretching back to its beginning in 1822. And Br. Rodney's burial was the first for one of African heritage in the Salem God's Acre since Br. Peter Oliver in 1810.

And finally, it's official. **Unity Board** reports that as of the first of this year, the worldwide Moravian Church for the first time topped a million members. Can you imagine? We're no longer so "little." But we certainly do have ample room for inviting others to join us, as this "little" Church of Christ continues to grow.

— Richard W. Starbuck
Moravian Archives
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