

A Memorabilia of 2005

If one word can summarize a year, 2005's word is "hurricanes."

We opened the year still shocked and saddened by the terrific devastation caused throughout the Indian Ocean by the Christmas tsunamis of 2004. Never before had we witnessed such destructive power. Then our own "hurricane season" opened, and by its end we were grappling with Greek letters for hurricane names, and Katrina had churned ominously on the cover of *The Moravian*. The destruction, from North Carolina to Florida to Central America to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, brought forth a huge outpouring of relief effort from all corners of the Southern Province.

Overseeing much of our relief work is the Board of World Mission with its veteran experience in sending out short-term work crews. Teams were sent especially to the Ocean Springs, Mississippi, area. A generous gift from Salem Congregation provided for a truck, trailer, and tools, and a new disaster-relief ministry is being formed with the Board of World Mission and Board of Evangelism and Home Missions.

Our coastal Moravian churches — Wilmington and Florida — were at one time or another in storm's path, but they all came through with relatively minor damage. Nicaragua and Honduras, though, suffered more vital loss when Hurricane Beta destroyed much of their crops. They will need our continuing prayer and concern into the new year.

Though tsunamis and storms and relief responses to them were a major focus this year, other "normal" events and activities kept us busy as a Province. Thanks go to agencies for their reports.

Our young people are a chief concern of the Board of Christian Education, and they had much to do during the year. The first children's mission lovefeast was held February 27 at Fairview. That was followed by a children's mission rally on September 11 at Laurel Ridge with the theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope." Both events received assistance from the Board of World Mission. Middle and senior high youth gathered for their Provincial youth lovefeast March 13 at Friedberg.

More than 50 youth and adults from the Southern Province flew to Calgary, Alberta, in July to attend High School CONVO 2005. The theme of "Learn the Story, Live the Faith" was shared by more than 200 Moravians from the United States and Canada and one from Ireland as they participated in worship, study, prayer, mission opportunities, hiking, rafting, and loads of fun.

The Board of Christian Education reports that its resource center is even more accessible to churches and members thanks to e-newsletters to Southern Province ministers and educators. Northern Province churches also get a copy. With DVD all the rage, the resource center now has a DVD player and is stocking DVDs including popular Moravian titles on Hus, First Fruits, Comenius, etc. Meanwhile, the last issue of *Expressions of the Heart* appeared this fall after a run of six years.

After 22 years of service at the Moravian Book & Gift shop and beyond, Sr. Jonetta Conrad retired October 1 as the shop's manager, a position she had held since 1999. Sr. Conrad was succeeded as manager by Kristi Vernon, who has held several management positions before coming to the Book & Gift Shop.

The Board of Christian Education sponsored a couple of firsts, a Common Threads Women's Retreat weekend and an Environmental Weekend, both at Laurel Ridge.

So much is going on at Laurel Ridge it's hard to recognize the place. Why even the flat-roofed 1960s cabins are getting facelifts, right up to the peak of their new pitched roofs. The big hit the past two summers has been the mission camps. In four weeks last summer 155 youth and 61 adults from 16 Moravian churches worked with 41 families in Ashe and Alleghany counties building ramps, shelves, playground equipment, birdhouses, tree houses, cleaning, landscaping, etc. While doing so, they pumped over \$18,000 into the local economy for building materials, gasoline, supplies,

and “fun.” Quoth one adult mission camper: “If anyone tries this just once, they are transformed.”

The big news at Laurel Ridge is of course its “Growing for a Lifetime” campaign. So far 536 gifts and pledges have been received for \$1.2 million of the \$1.95 million goal. Churches, fellowships, and Sunday school classes have also contributed to this legacy of greatly expanding Higgins Lodge. Have you made your pledge for this Moravian jewel in the mountains?

If the Mission Society’s annual lovefeast in November is any indication, the mission spirit is very much alive and well in the Southern Province. The service at Macedonia had 402 attending, a record number. Even more encouraging for our future work, about 20 percent were young people, also a record. The Mission Society was busy throughout the year, contributing to the support of nine full-time missionaries and their families serving in third world countries. The Society also supported 13 youth groups from Moravian churches in summer mission activities through its Young People in Mission program and nine adults on short term mission trips. The Mission Residence on Main Street had a major face lifting in the downstairs apartment, and has been occupied more this year than any other time. The Society will attend a worldwide summit of mission societies in the Moravian Unity in March 2006.

Mission service lost a great servant when Irvin Leinbach passed away in July. It was through his and Gretta Gene’s vision, and the Global Concerns Committee at Bethania, that the Moravian Tibetan Rug Shop, now known as the World Mission Shop, opened in 1989. As he had shipped tractors and equipment around the world, Br. Leinbach saw to the purchasing and shipping of goods from mission areas to stock the Mission Shop.

It was a watershed year in the life of Sunnyside Ministry. In December, after much planning and BEHM approval, the Sunnyside Program Board was created and assumed responsibility for the direction of the ministry and mission at Sunnyside. The 15 members of this Board have met monthly and have been of great support to Sunnyside in the areas of church and community relations, program, finances, properties, and development. The impact of the Sunnyside Program Board is already evident in all of Sunnyside’s operation, and the future of Christ’s ministry here has never been more secure.

Sunnyside’s greatest challenge in 2005 has been apparent in the last two months as total expenses for the year approached \$750,000. This year 5,000 requests were approved for service at an average cost of \$150 each. The unprecedented high costs for heating this winter is straining resources, but it seems that as long as we all remember that we are involved in a ministry of love and justice in the name of Christ, then all the needs of our most at-risk brothers and sisters can be met in his most holy name.

Education doesn’t stop when we reach adulthood, and our interest in things Moravian showed with a record turnout for the Board of Christian Education’s Summer Lay Seminary, which was held July 8-10 at Laurel Ridge. Br. Craig Atwood led the scholars on a weekend introduction to “that incomparable Moravian,” John Amos Comenius.

Br. Atwood has additional opportunity to exercise his teaching skills. Thanks to a new joint undertaking of Home Church and Wake Forest University, he is now the Comenius Visiting Professor of Moravian Studies at Wake’s Divinity School. It’s also a real opportunity to spread around Moravian history, heritage, and theology.

Though it is 400 miles away in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Moravian Theological Seminary continues to reach out to us in the Southern Province, thanks to modern technology. The seminary offered three graduate courses this fall at the Distant Learning Classroom in the Salem College Fine Arts Center. Students could enroll on degree, non-degree, or audit level. Additional continuing education opportunities ranged from the annual Moses Lecture to Comenius, evangelism, Holy Land archaeology, and

Moravian heritage. It seems our seminary really is offering something for everyone, and in some cases we don't even have to leave the comfort of our homes.

Taking a bold step to the future, Salem Academy and College on October 27 announced a \$75 million campaign, triple the size of any previous campaign. With \$45 million already raised, Salem has provided new athletic fields for intercollegiate competition. Other projects include restoring the Single Sisters House on Salem Square (which Salem notes is the oldest college building in North Carolina), modernizing (and air conditioning) Bitting, South, and Clewell residence halls, and providing \$15 million in endowment and \$12 million in annual funds. This ambitious campaign culminates the 15-year tenure of Julianne Still Thrift, who will retire next June as president of Salem Academy and College.

The Moravian Music Foundation saw two milestones in 2005. For the first time in the Foundation's 49-year history, its director had a sabbatical; and during that time, the "Director's Office" was in the Foundation's Bethlehem office, with Assistant Director Albert Frank serving as Acting Director. Nola Knouse's sabbatical resulted in the near-completion of her book, *Introduction to the Music of the Moravians* (to be published late in 2006 or early 2007), along with time for her to work on crocheting, gardening, and woodworking projects. As Acting Director, Br. Frank had weekly conference calls with the Winston-Salem staff, traveled to Germany and South Africa, serving as American coordinator for the first-ever Unity Brass Festival to be held in the fall of 2007. Meanwhile, Bart Collins and Beth Wall managed the not-so-routine day-to-day activities of the Winston-Salem office.

Upon her return from sabbatical in July, Sr. Knouse jumped right into the completion of programming for the 2006 Moravian Music Festival, recording sessions for MMF's next compact disk recording of music of the 26th N.C. Regimental Band (to be released in the fall of 2006), and plans for MMF's 50th anniversary celebration (the whole year of 2006). So 2005 proved to be a year of stability and plans for future publications, recordings, and concerts.

As churches send in their records — board minutes, correspondence, financial reports, memoirs, etc. — the Moravian Archives continues to carefully file and safe-keep them for historians and church members decades hence. The most recent large body of records to be processed was about 100 years of documents, maps, and financial reports from Salem Congregation and the Provincial Treasurer's Office. The Archives added to its impressive list of publications. Early in the year Archivist Daniel Crews outlined the basic beliefs of the Moravian experience in *This We Most Certainly Believe: Thoughts on Moravian Theology*. Written in a down-to-earth style for the everyday reader, *This We* is a handy resource for Sunday school classes to study and for the casual reader to ponder over what makes us Moravians truly Moravian. The Archives' most recent publication is a high-tech format of one of the Moravian Church's oldest documents. The Ancient Unity's Confession of 1535, newly translated by Br. Crews from the original Latin, is on the Archives' web site on the Internet. Check it out at www.MoravianArchives.org in the Archives' growing list of e-books.

Making histories of their own were the congregations of the Southern Province. The largest building campaign during 2005 was at **Covenant** in Wilmington. After many delays and much patience, the congregation is seeing that its new fellowship hall and renovated sanctuary are truly worth it. Now comes the real work of filling up the new facility. Organs are always popular, and several churches are planning for them. **King** has been interviewing organ builders. **Kernersville** is installing its second Nordlie tracker organ. This one will go in the Historic Chapel, one of the oldest buildings in Kernersville. Meanwhile, **Messiah** and **Raleigh** saw the need for restoration work on their current organs. Vacation Bible School was a staple in many of our congregations during the summer. For example, **Cordero de Dios** had 50 children attending each day. **Ardmore** was quick to put its newly acquired "Hawthorne House" to use. At first it held small group meetings such as Women's Fellowship, committees, and prayer groups. But after hurricane Katrina, it was temporarily designated for families who had lost their

homes. Meanwhile, **Kernersville** bought the Stafford house next door with the intention of housing youth ministry there. But a “change of use” from “residential” to “general assembly” meant a multitude of building code requirements and expenses. The problem is being studied. The newest fellowship in the Province was recognized May 29 at **Margate**, Florida. Nearby **Prince of Peace** is providing support and leadership for the group. One of the oldest churches in the Province, **Hope**, celebrated its 225th anniversary with a week of services in August. Still wrestling with its future is **Good Shepherd**, where membership is admittedly low. Prayers and concerns and hopes for increasing membership and attendance are welcome. Stewardship and commitment are vital at all churches. At **New Hope** (Newton) pledges have been generous enough that the congregation should be mortgage free by the end of 2006.

As the year rolled by, Provincial Elders Conference increasingly devoted its time to planning for Synod, which will be held April 19-23, 2006, again at Black Mountain, North Carolina. Churches elected their delegates well in advance this year. Small planning groups began meeting in earnest. Various reports to Synod have been collected. Nominations for various boards were submitted. Synod officers have been named. Details down to seating arrangement are being worked out. All of this planning is to help make as smooth as possible the work of the delegates as they seek to discern the will of our Chief Elder for this Province as a part of the Moravian Church, just one small branch of the body of Christ on earth, His Church.

We cannot leave 2005 behind without noting one pastoral passing. In 1941 John Kapp and his “recent bride” Louise began serving Willow Hill and neighboring Mount Bethel in the mountains of Virginia. Sixty-four years and a number of pastorates – Leaksville, Providence, Oak Grove, Fulp, Mayodan, Union Cross, Macedonia – later, Br. and Sr. Kapp are retiring from pastoral service – from Willow Hill. Often James Montgomery’s hymn is sung too late for the subject to appreciate it. In John and Louise’s case we are not too late: “Servants of God, well done!”

– Richard W. Starbuck