

A Memorabilia of 2007

Without doubt, 2007 will be remembered for the 550th anniversary of the Moravian Church. With special services and liturgies, stickers and computer “clip art,” articles and bulletin inserts, even Garrison Keillor broadcasting “A Prairie Home Companion” from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (thank you, Northern Province), we celebrated the birth of the Unitas Fratrum — that’s the official name of our church — in 1457 in a village called Kunvald in what today is the Czech Republic.

Underlining the 550th was a strong emphasis on mission, as called for by the Provincial Synod of 2006. All the celebrating and remembering give us strength and guidance to continue the Lord’s work in the world today and for many years to come.

And so the service held November 4 in Wait Chapel on the campus of Wake Forest University was a perfect combination. It was the culminating celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Moravian Church, and it was also the 84th anniversary lovefeast of the Mission Society of the Moravian Church, South.

It was a grand affair, one to savor and recollect many years from now with the question, “Were you there?” About 1,500 Moravians and guests were there, along with steel band, handbells, and choirs. Special guest Bishop Hopeton Clennon reminded us in an address entitled “Pass the Salt” that we are Christ’s salt of the earth to do his will. Most touching was the collection of \$4,000 raised by children of the Southern Province and presented at the lovefeast for Nicaraguan youth and children affected by hurricanes. And the band? “There were 550 there; I counted them,” declared one reminiscing soul (who might have counted them all twice).

While the 550th and mission were central themes of 2007, there were other notable accomplishments in the Southern Province. After four years of planning, fund raising, and construction, construction, construction, Laurel Ridge opened the long-awaited “Salem Wing” to Higgins Lodge with the dedication on August 11. With its grand entrance foyer, two conference rooms, 24 guest rooms, new kitchen, and expanded dining room, it is a beautiful addition to the facilities of Laurel Ridge. Indeed, it will make our church “home in the mountains” even more of a joy to visit.

It should be noted that the “Growing for a Lifetime” campaign for the new Higgins wing topped its goal of \$1,950,000 by raising \$2,163,000 including in-kind gifts. Take a bow, all 800 or so who contributed. Your combined efforts made it possible. And remember too the “Higgins Legacy Fund” has been established to build an endowment for the further service and outreach of our beloved Laurel Ridge.

More than 300 church leaders throughout the Southern Province attended the first annual series of Provincial Leadership Focus, held at New Philadelphia, Prince of Peace, and Raleigh Moravian. Church board members, musicians, leaders, and teachers got to attend a number of workshops conducted by Provincial agency members and leaders. Already plans are well under way for a second round of Provincial Leadership Focus in 2008, so if you want to hone your leadership skills (and learn more about the Southern Province), you will have your chance in the new year.

The many commissions and committees of the Provincial Board of Christian Education kept busy during the year. Laurel Ridge received accreditation from the American Camping Association, and held six successful (and popular!) mission camps in the summer. The Children and Family Commission has a new “Roots & Wings” family web site up and running. A design conference and a writing team meeting have been held for the new Moravian Family Spiritual Formation Resource. As an indication of the outreach of the Board of Christian Education, curriculum and resource sales and support were provided to 135 churches (73 Moravian and 62 non-Moravian).

The Board of Evangelism and Home Missions lived up to its name by providing a number of workshops during the year emphasizing welcoming newcomers, community ministry, and evangelism outreach. In addition BEHM is providing a quarterly e-newsletter on evangelism for pastors and outreach-evangelism leaders of congregations.

As the growth engine of the Province, BEHM shepherds new and developing churches and fellowships as well as smaller congregations. To that end, BEHM

developed an assessment process to help pastors discern a call to a ministry of church planting. New Beginnings in Huntersville, North Carolina, made use of some of its Cornerstone Campaign funds to purchase an adjoining lot to provide more parking, a sure sign of a growing church. La Iglesia Morava Cordero de Dios (Lamb of God Moravian Church) opened a food pantry ministry in April 15, and in short order it grew to serve 60-80 families each month. Mountain Laurel Moravian Fellowship in Laurel Springs near Laurel Ridge has organized as the newest fellowship in the Province. Plans have been made for the sale of the property in Asheville where Morning Star Fellowship had been meeting, as that fellowship makes plans for a new meeting place.

BEHM also joined with the Board of World Mission in the ongoing Moravian Disaster Response efforts in Mississippi as that area still recovers from the devastation of hurricane Katrina.

Want to keep up with all the activities of BEHM? You can now and download resources too on BEHM's new web site, www.moravianevangelism.org.

Sunnyside Ministry experienced a change in leadership in 2007 when Roma Combs retired after 10 years as director and was succeeded by Tommy Cole. Sunnyside continues to serve the poor and hungry in its target area of Forsyth County, and offers the opportunity for volunteers to serve those who find themselves in crisis situations. Is there an opportunity for you? You bet. Just last year Sunnyside conducted 4,334 interviews in its financial assistance program. The food program helped 4,442, and the clothing program 1,612. That's a lot of volunteer time you can be a part of.

The year saw several international gatherings. Some 600 Moravian women, from England to South Africa, Jamaica to India, and some from the Southern Province gathered June 27-30 in Northfield, Minnesota, for the 10th Moravian Women's Conference. Sessions ranged from Bible study to child-rearing advice to the 550th anniversary, and collections were made for the 2008 Women's Consultation "Valiant Women in a Violent World" to be held in Herrnhut, Germany, and the Board of World Mission's global HIV/AIDS ministry. Last summer those participating in the Young Adult Convo found themselves on a pilgrimage to historic Moravian Church sites in Europe — the perfect thing to do to have the 550th come alive. It was truly "A Journey Home to Find Our Future." Mission was the focus at Laurel Ridge toward summer's end when the Board of World Mission sponsored "FEET FIRST Youth in Mission Summit." Some 50 young Moravians from England, Labrador, and a number of states got to explore their faith and better define where God is calling them.

Since hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in August 2005, Moravians have made numerous short-term mission trips to the area to help in the rebuilding. Last spring the Moravian Disaster Response of the Board of World Mission partnered with Habitat of Humanity for the building of three new Habitat houses in the Biloxi-Ocean Springs area. Over the summer, the outpouring of work crews from Moravian churches was tremendous. Just from March through July the Mission Society of the Moravian Church, South, supported 103 youth and 45 adults in short-term mission projects. The Board of World Mission's "Adopt-a-Village" program also continues support from the Southern Province. "Adopt-a-Village" assists orphans in villages of the Sikonge region of Tanzania. The children are not AIDS victims, but have lost their parents to the disease.

As short-term missions have become more popular, the Mission Society of the Moravian Church, South, has found less need to maintain the mission residence at 433 S. Main Street in Salem for missionaries on extended furloughs. So the Society sold the residence to Old Salem, Inc., for a "good price," and for a mission residence reached an agreement for leasing Hope's parsonage. Meanwhile, income from the mission residence sale supports short-term mission.

Onward, the Mission Society's newsletter got a new look in 2007 with a new editor, Glenna J. Tasedan, and the popular "Pray Every Day" is compiled by Helen Gullledge with continuing contribution by Bishop Bob Iobst.

The Moravian Music Foundation enjoyed another enthusiastic year of proclaiming and sharing Moravian music. Two new CDs were issued and are sure to be favorites. The first, *Sing, O Ye Heavens*, features the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, Florida, performing a number of anthems and arias that can be called "Moravian

greatest hits.” Dr. John V. Sinclair, well known in Moravian music circles, conducts. Just in time to be a Christmas stocking stuffer, the second CD became available. Appropriately enough for the season, *Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers* features Moravian music for Advent and Christmas. Drake Flynt conducts the King Moravian Church Choir with orchestra in the 25 favorite hymns and anthems. On the staff side, Albert H. Frank retired as assistant director in the Bethlehem office. He was succeeded by another familiar face in Moravian music circles, Gwyneth A. Michel.

The Moravian Music Foundation took a bold step in 2007 with its own music publication series. *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ* by Johann Christian Bechler is the first anthem printed in the Moravian Star Anthem Series. Arrangements were made with a small company in Ohio to do the printing.

The Moravian Archives was busy during the year adding to its list of “e-books” on its web site. *Ratio Disciplinae* is the church constitution of the early Unitas Fratrum, and is a detailed account of the workings of the “Ancient Unity.” *Memorial Days* gives first-hand accounts of the early days of the “Renewed Unity” of the 1700s. Included in *Memorial Days* are the 1727 “Statutes of the Congregation at Herrnhut.” This was the first Brotherly Agreement of the Moravian Church, or as we call it today Moravian Covenant for Christian Living. Check out the Archives’ web site at www.MoravianArchives.org.

Looking to 2008, the Moravian Archives is hard at work on a new history of the Ancient Unity plus — and this will be a big hit for sure — a *Worldwide Unity Cookbook*, which should please the heart — or stomach — of all good Moravians.

Salemtowne received a gift in 2007 that more than doubled the Moravian retirement community’s acreage. Westerly, the estate of the late Charles H. Babcock adjoins Salemtowne, and its 58.7 acres include a barn, a pond, and the house where Babcock lived for more than 30 years until his death in March 2005. The gift of Westerly to Salemtowne was made by the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation with the stipulation that a large portion of the estate remain in its natural state.

Last February PEC President Wayne Burkette represented the Moravian Church at the inaugural charter-signing meeting of a new emerging ecumenical fellowship called Christian Churches Together. In six short years, Christian Churches Together has become the most inclusive fellowship of Christian churches in America, including churches from five broad traditions: evangelical-Pentecostal, Orthodox, Catholic, historic Protestant, and racial-ethnic churches.

Two presidents of educational institutions were inaugurated in 2007. Christopher M. Thomforde was installed as the 15th president of Moravian College and Theological Seminary on April 21. He is an ordained Lutheran minister and was president of St. Olaf College when he was named president of Moravian in August 2006. Susan E. Pauly was inaugurated as the 19th president of Salem Academy and College on April 27. She was vice president for academic affairs and dean of Mount Mercy College when she was named president of Salem in March 2006.

On April 22, 2007, Salem’s Sisters House had its second dedication, 221 years after its first dedication on April 5, 1786. Thanks to a little work by the Moravian Music Foundation and Moravian Archives, the lovefeast ode used in 1786 was also used last April. The Sisters House served as home for the Single Sisters Choir of Salem, until it was turned over to Salem College in 1910. The building had fallen into sad disrepair when in 2001 the college launched a massive restoration project that has produced a splendid blend of old and new. “Sisters,” as Salem College now fondly calls the Sisters House, is truly a jewel of a building, which the college boasts “is the oldest building on a college campus in North Carolina.” And Salem College can also add, “with all the comforts of modern technology.”

Our Moravian Theological Seminary, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, celebrated an anniversary of its own in 2007. It was 200 hundred years ago on October 2, 1807, when the first seminary class met at Nazareth Hall in Pennsylvania. It had three students and two instructors. Going into this bicentennial year, the student body had grown to 110, with six full-time professors and 16 adjunct faculty members.

Among the churches of the Southern Province, organs and land seemed to be the topic of most interest in 2007 when not celebrating the 550th or involved in mission. **King**, which has a fabulous music program, has taken the plunge for an organ. Installation by C.B. Fisk/Shreiner should take 2½ years, with a total cost estimated at \$775,000. After almost 50 years of heavy service **Home's** Aeolian-Skinner organ is having a thorough repair and cleaning. The work is being done by J. Allen Farmer, Inc. **Fries Memorial's** organ also underwent renovation for the first time in 20 years. The work was done by members of the congregation under the supervision of Randy Thrift, son of Vernon Thrift, who originally installed the organ. Among the special services for Moravian Music Sunday on May 6 was the dedication of the Ida Roberts Memorial Chapel Organ in **Kernersville's** Memorial Chapel. It took months of negotiation, but **Leaksville** finally purchased the school property next door. Now the church has ample room for expansion and future parking needs. **Olivet** made the final mortgage payment in 2007 on 15.39 acres of adjoining land it purchased in 2001. Olivet's Joint Board then set a goal for 2007: "Consider a Family Life Center." **Kernersville** made provision for the future by purchasing property across the street from its graveyard. The expanded God's Acre now has new benches and fencing, and cedar trees are going in along the walk to the graveyard.

After years of studying the matter, **Salem Congregation** has begun demoulding the graves in the old section of Salem God's Acre. This follows the practice in other Moravian graveyards. Without the rise and fall of mounds, Salem God's Acre will be easier (read cheaper) to maintain. Even better, when the demoulding is completed Salem God's Acre will present a picture of neatness and uniformity. You can already see the results where the work has been completed.

Easter in 2007 was fairly late, April 8, but that didn't prevent a cold snap from plunging temperatures to 25 degrees. Despite a few frozen horn valves the Sunrise Services were beautiful with a clear sunrise. Easter in 2008 will be March 23, the earliest since 1913. Keep your long johns handy.

The last night of 2007 is giving us something a little different. For the first time since 1771, Salem Congregation's Watchnight service will not be held in Old Salem and since 1800 in Home Church. Instead, beginning this year the service is being shared by the 12 Moravian churches that make up Salem Congregation. Tuesday night the Watchnight will be at Trinity, in "Sunnyside" across Salem Creek from Old Salem. One thing won't change, though. As the Salem Diary for 1771 put it, "Then the trombones heralded the New Year with the melody, *Now Thank We All Our God.*"

And so for a blend of new and old, of celebration and mission, the year 2007 will be hard to beat. We close our survey with a note from Br. Wayne Burkette. When asked for highlights from Provincial Elders Conference for 2007, he replied: "The most creative action I can think of is PEC's approval of a proposal by Brad Bennett to work with a leadership team to develop a new model of worship and Christian community gathering somewhere in the Winston-Salem area. You could think of it as a new model for being the church. It will be aimed primarily at folks who consider themselves Christians (or at least interested!) but who, for various reasons, are not inclined toward affiliation with a traditional congregational model. David Guthrie and BEHM are also supportive of this effort. We don't know what may or may not develop as the model is implemented, but it is innovative and non-traditional and very much in keeping with our history for trying to reach persons whom nobody else is reaching with the Good News!"

— Richard W. Starbuck
Moravian Archives
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