



The Information

"I must turn aside and look at this great sight..." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses" And he said, "Here I am." Exodus 3 vs 3-4 (NRSV)

April, 2021

REIMAGINING CHURCH



**Rev. Algernon Lewis
Chairman of PEC**

In recent times of reflection, I have become convinced that the world as we know it has changed forever. My view is that there is no going back to a previous normal. We must look around and look ahead and adapt to the realities as they are and not as we would like them to be. Our previous ways of operating were based on assumptions that applied at a previous time. All our interactions with people outside our homes must be examined, as one minor infraction such as touching something they touched, could mean contracting a disease. The previous assumption was there was no need to check. That has changed forever!

The assumptions under which we operate as a church have also changed. Church is based on the gathered community working and worshipping together. Kiononia or fellowship is central to the life of the church. Generally, membership meant some level of involvement in the various ministries of the church and required physical presence. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended both the expectations and the assumptions and ushered us into the wilderness.

The term wilderness is deliberately used as a point of reference for Israel when they were delivered from Egypt. The wilderness provided an opportunity for them to discover God in ways they had been longing for – they wanted to be close to God and live under God’s direct protection and provision. Yet when God came among them, they neither recognized God’s presence nor desired it. They reached back for the structures of Egypt to buttress their faith. In other words, they could not understand God outside of the Egyptian lenses. Does this have any relevance for us as a church in the pandemic? This article aims to provoke thoughts and discussions on our practice of ministry in the current context.

FUNERALS

How are we to reimagine church without the structures that we have set up to protect the institution of the church.

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Vision Statement

**A Church - Transformed,
United,
Victorious in Christ**

Mission Statement

By the grace of God, we seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ; without distinction, we use all that we possess to call all peoples to the truth of the Gospel through worship, evangelism, discipleship and service.

Mailing Address

**Moravian Church - EWIP Province
Cashew Hill, P.O. Box 504
St. John's, Antigua
Tel: (268)560-0185 , Fax(268)462-0643
EMAIL ADDRESS
Office: moravianchewip@gmail.com
Chairman: moravianchurchewip@gmail.com
WEB ADDRESS : [//www.moravians.net](http://www.moravians.net)**

Reimagining Church continued from page 1

Look at funerals for example. Funerals are important in the life of any congregation. Members who served long and faithfully expect to be given a “good” funeral. A good funeral includes lots of beautiful traditional hymns, lots of tributes, a nice sermon, support from the congregation, and yes, some show of emotions. How do we reimagine a “good” funeral when the elements of a good funeral are not allowed? How do we dignify the member whose identity is bound up with this community of faith for their three score years and ten? Should we just say that COVID-19 restrictions prevent us from having a “good” funeral and be satisfied that this person gets buried in the cemetery? What message are we sending to the surviving relatives who feel that their loved one deserved more? What does faithfully adapting to this context means with our theological, sociological, and psychological understanding of death, grief, and loss? How might we reimagine a funeral that harnesses deep liturgical and pastoral praxes and dignifies the dead while comforting the living?

With the existential threats that the church faces in this cultural context, a new pastoral imagination is required to harness the opportunities provided by a funeral and other ministry opportunities. If these ministry opportunities are not engaged with a greater level of pastoral imagination, we might lose the opportunity to minister to people at one of their most vulnerable moments and send the message that a few minutes at the Lord’s Acre are sufficient. In a time when more people see the church as less than significant to their existence, greater effort is required to testify to the indispensable role of pastoral presence and the church at the time of death and dying. One might even say that the pandemic has provided an opportunity to focus on the real essentials of a “good” funeral, which is the assurance of the sufficiency of God at a time of discomfort.

SACRAMENTS

What are we to do with the sacraments in the wilderness wandering? The Moravian Church recognizes two sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion. Each of the sacraments has structures built around them to preserve their integrity. The COVID-19 protocols challenge the structures built around these practices. How does a baby or an adult for that matter, gets baptized with the pastor standing six feet away? How are the godparents to meaningfully participate during the ceremony? New thinking and new imagination are required. What is the essence of baptism and what makes it authentic? How much of the baptism ceremony is required by God and how much is required by the institu-

tion of the church? What happens if lockdowns and physical distancing continue? How do we adapt and remain authentic in initiating people into the Christian faith? Is it sufficient to say wait until we can get back together in a familiar setting? Is it that God does not want baptisms done in this wilderness, or is it that we cannot see beyond our current practices and adapt to the context? There are no answers here, only questions.

Communion presents a similar challenge. “Moravians believe that Christ is present in Holy Communion, but there is no particular teaching on how the presence of Christ should be explained” (Vogt, 2019, p. 131). “From the beginning, the Moravian Church has declined to enter into controversy concerning the manner of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper, and the words of the Institution are the words Jesus used when he gave the bread and cup to His disciples, omitting any human interpretation (Matt 26:26-27. Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-26)” (Fries, 2003, p. 48).

Moravians essentially partake of Communion by faith – believing what Jesus said, “this is My body...this is my blood of the new covenant.” There is no attempt to reduce the mystery to human explanation. So how do we adapt our practice of special dress, special music, special seating arrangements, and years of practice, in this wilderness? How do we bring people to the table of the Lord in this wilderness knowing that there is only one table? What does faithful adaptation look like? How might we gather around the table of the Lord and connect with our members who feel disconnected, without them leaving the safety of their homes? Does God really want us to be estranged from this place of covenant renewal while in the wilderness? Further, what message is being sent to the members who have not come to the table since March 2020 because of the attendant risks? Questions of relevance and necessity must be asked if communion can be suspended for extended periods without any interim provisions being made. Where is the Holy Spirit leading us on these issues?

FAITH FORMATION

Faith formation among youth and ministry groups is of particular concern. How do we adapt Sunday School, youth ministries, confirmation classes, and ministry groups to the wilderness? Are there new incarnations of these ministries that beckon us beyond where we have been before? Is Jesus calling us to come out of the boat and walk on water? (Luke 14: 27-31). How might the law of God be put in their minds and be written on their hearts so that the members might serve God? (Jeremiah 31:34).

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“WE SHOULD TALK!” CARIBBEAN/ EUROPEAN MORAVIAN DIALOGUE

Rev. Dr. Winelle Kirton-Roberts

“People may hear your words but they feel your attitude.” John C. Maxwell

In the summer of 2003, as I was pursuing my doctoral studies, I completed a six-week intense course on “German for Academic Reading” at the Princeton University, USA. It seemed miraculous to me that, at the end of the course, I was able to read any German literature (Unfortunately I have forgotten most of it). Learning the language, as well as the history, culture, and current affairs of Germany, illuminated my mind.



The language itself, which was direct, descriptive, and commanding, gave me an informative glimpse into the philosophy and disposition of Germans. As a

historian, I placed in perspective the German-centric Moravian missions to the Caribbean. As a present Pastor in the Unitas Fratrum, I could better frame the points of views of my European brothers and sisters.

My ultimate take-away from the course is that learning the language of a people is critical in communication. However, it should be mutual.



When the Moravian missionaries/ministers learned the languages of the people of different regions, they were certainly well positioned to converse with and convert them. But it is a travesty that the people were not taught the German language, then nor now. Like me, this has kept closed the curtains to more effective interaction.

In the Church as in the world, there continue to be fierce rifts, conflicts, and disagreements that threaten to divide us. I believe that communication is helpful not to necessarily bring us all onto the same page but to understand and accept why we may be on different pages.

For Caribbean people, centuries of “believing what was said,” “doing what you are told” and “holding on to what has been taught” are coming to an end. The times of being labelled, misconstrued, and branded are behind us. The days of being judged, belittled, and dehumanized are over.

As a Caribbean person, living in Europe, I believe the key to better communication is not as much the words that are being said as it is the attitude. As I improve my language skills, mostly now in French with a little German, I am happy that most residents are willing to forgive my mistakes (words) because they know my intent (attitude). I have two general suggestions each for the Caribbean and the European people.



Switzerland meets the Caribbean” The theme for the Joint Service for the Moravian Church in Switzerland, September 2020.

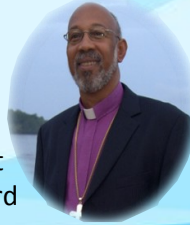
Firstly, the Caribbean person in communicating with the European, will be advised always to have full disclosure. Generally, in the wealthier nations of the world, there is the perception that persons from developing nations have come to take away something. It is therefore necessary to be clear, transparent, and direct. While it may be tiring at times, it is critical to spell out who you are, what your intentions are, and what your expectations are. Language chosen must express that you desire to be part of something in which you can make a valuable contribution.

Secondly, the Caribbean person must dismiss the perception of idyllic Europeans. The hagiographic history of the Moravian Church presented this sinless, flawless, problem-less, pristine Church. With this thought, the Caribbean person can communicate in a way that you believe yourself to be sinful, inferior, and even tainted. Yet the reality is that we are all imperfect human beings. We all have hardships and pains that may be expressed differently. We therefore must communicate from a position of strength, self-worth, and confidence.

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God Calls us to Ministry The Minister as Priest

By the Rt. Rev. Dr. A. Kingsley Lewis



The Christian ministry involves the fulfilment of various roles or functions. We have heard others speak of some of these and indeed you probably have used some of the terms expressive of these functions yourself. I am thinking of words such as “priest”, “pastor”, “preacher”. This does not mean that we are speaking of separate or different people. Rather, these names describe various responsibilities of a minister.

I will specifically focus on four of these functions in this series of articles. In this article I wish to focus on “priest”.

We learn in the very first Book of the Bible of Melchizedek who was a “priest of the most high God” (Genesis 14:17-20). We learn in the Book of Exodus that it is God who calls or designates priests to serve him. God called and appointed Aaron and his sons as priests. He said to Moses that he should “take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office... and thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty...And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office. (Exodus 28.1-14)

We are told of the functions of the priests under the Old Covenant in Leviticus 9. He made sacrifice on the altar on behalf of the people; he led them in worship to the most high God. The priest was the mediator between God and man. Under the New Covenant that situation is changed. Hebrews 5 makes this clear: “for every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices” (Hebrews 5:1) But Christ became both the perfect unblemished sacrificial lamb and our High Priest. He was therefore our mediator and there is no other sacrifice acceptable to God. Thus we find that “Most Protestant churches, like the Roman and Orthodox churches, specify that as a general rule only those who are ordained should administer the sacraments (except in cases of emergency) ...to be certain that these most sacred rights and services are carried out reverently and properly, with understanding of their significance for the life of God’s people.” (Groenfeldt 1967, 14). The Priest under the New Covenant leads the people in the worship of God.

The Biblical record is also clear that a priest should be a true man of God with a high standard of personal conduct. Leviticus 21: 1-9 and 1 Timothy 3 speak to this quite emphatically.

The scriptures imply that “the priest is to know and preserve the religious heritage of the people” and thus “the Priests became the scholars of their day and the guardians of the purity of the faith.” (Groenfeldt 1967, 14-15) John Groenfeldt makes the important point in relation to this that, “The recognition of this aspect of the minister’s priestly function is the reason we put such great value on a thorough and complete education for our ministers. It is not enough to know *how* to administer the sacraments. The minister must know the significance of the forms of worship that he uses. He must be well acquainted with the message of the Bible, the history of his own Church and the Christian Church in general. He must know how the message of the Gospel has been understood down through the ages in various times and situations and where our own Church stands on questions of interpretation.” (Groenfeldt 1967, 15)

In conclusion, let us note that in the Old Testament times the priest was not elected. Nor did he select himself; he was chosen by God. (Groenfeldt 1967, 16)

William Willimon makes the important observation that “The theology of ordination has at its heart ‘the simple fact that priests (pope, bishops) are and function as officials of the Christian community.’” (Willimon 2002, 72)

Willimon goes on to make a very important point when he says, “With my protestant heritage, I recognize that an ordained minister should be, must be, called by God. That call from God should be personal, experiential, and received and responded to with some degree of specificity. I know of no good pastor who cannot point to some time in life in which he or she was led to say yes. But with Calvin, I recognize a “twofold call” to the presbyterate. God calls us, and the church calls us.” (Willimon 2002, 73)

In connection with ordination, (the laying on of hands), the ordinand is presented with the Bible, the surplice and the communion kit (at the service or after). Thus, he or she is equipped for being a priest of the Most high God under the New Covenant—for leading the people of God in worship including the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

References

Groenfeldt, John S. 1967. *We Have This Ministry*. Board of Christian Education and Evangelism, Moravian Church in America.

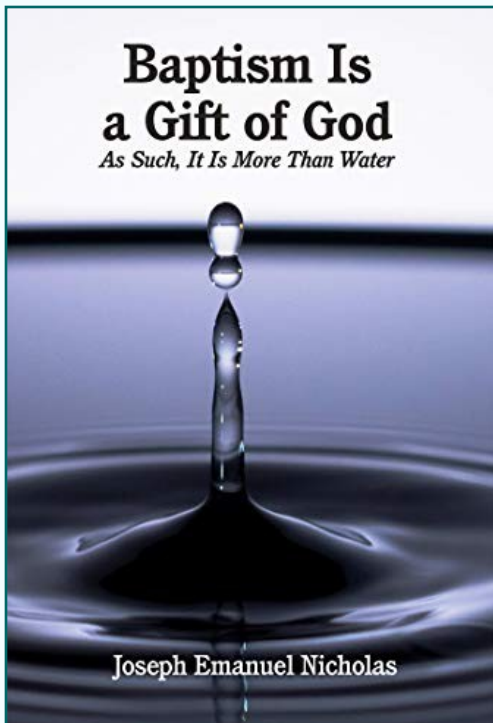
Willimon, William H. 2002. *Pastor*. Abingdon Press.

NEW BOOK

We are pleased to announce the publication of the book by Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Nicholas,

Baptism is a Gift of God – *As such, it is more than Water*

Books are now available at the Moravian Headquarters at Cashew Hill at EC\$46.00 each.



Quote of the Day

Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen,
I will be exalted in the earth.

Psalms 46:10


Reimagining Church continued from page 2

I am convinced that God does not want the church to die in the wilderness. Could it be that the Spirit of God is working to strip away structures and systems that have faithfully served their time and purpose? However we choose to answer these questions, it is clear that the church needs to adapt faithfully being mindful that there is a difference between core values and treasured practices. As we follow the trajectory and narrative of Scripture, we discover God consistently calling God’s people forward into new covenants that enhance devotion to God and strip away empty rituals. Maybe we are at one of those pivotal points and God is calling us to SHIFT!

The Moravian Church EWIP

Contact us on

 At Moravian Church EWIP

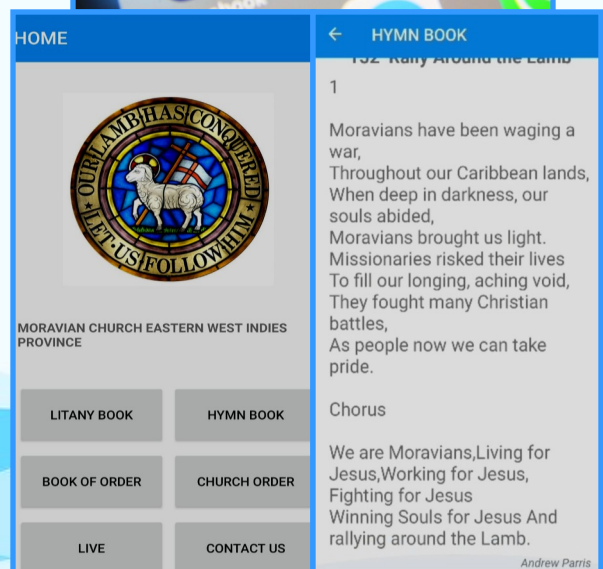
 At Moravian Church Eastern West Indies Province

Web: www.moravians.net

Email: moravianchurchewip@gmail.com

Coming Soon:-

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH EWIP APP



"WE SHOULD TALK!" CARIBBEAN/ EUROPEAN MORAVIAN DIALOGUE - Continued from Page 3

The European must communicate with the Caribbean person in the way parents communicate with their adult children. As children grow and thrive for independence, it does not mean that they are to be abandoned, for the need is different at each stage. But they no longer want to be told what to do.

It is my suggestion that the European should firstly assume that others have a good knowledge of who they are. With access to education and development, Caribbean people better understand their history, their culture, and their current circumstance. With a history of dislocation and pain, the last thing Caribbean people want is for a European to make an assessment about them. For example, I heard a European living in the Caribbean make the statement, "the people are too lazy to think!" What? This is not the right language. The language should therefore not be judgmental, prescriptive, or dogmatic. Therefore, instead of "you are..," or "you need to," ask "What do you think?" or "What do you plan to do?" Resistance and resentment are sure to follow any insult to people's intelligence.



Winelle Kirton-Roberts presenting a lecture and preaching at Moravian Weekend Family Retreat in Hamburg Germany, October 2019.



Presenting report on the Geneva Fellowship to the Assembly of the Moravian Church in Switzerland, October 2020. It was formally endorsed.

Secondly, there should be mutual respect. The language of the European should demonstrate the equality of humanity. It means that I value the authenticity of the ideas and convictions of others, even if I do not agree.

I do not subscribe to the view that because I have more than others that I dictate their thinking and actions. Having been in this world, as a parent, I should naturally have more to give than my children. It does not mean that I should diminish or undervalue what they bring to the table. I could not manage a zoom service had it not been for my 16-year-old daughter providing the technical support. This is a recognition that there is still much that I do not know and may not know. And, I am willing to be taught from someone who I taught.

In conclusion, communication is difficult. It takes times. It requires humility. It is necessary to put in the hard work and be inconvenienced to build relationships. Communication is a critical exercise in learning from and an instrument to changing others. For often, one wonders whether "let's talk" means "let me tell you." The more we know, the better we are positioned to say the right words and have the right attitude.



Happy Birthday

To Celebrants - April 8th - 30th

Sis. Rosalind Prince	26
Bro. Mikie Roberts	27

&

To Celebrants - May 10th -15th

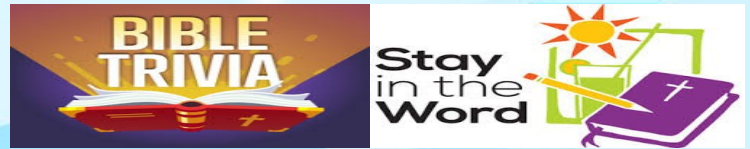
Bro. Patmore Smith	10
Sis. Ivy Vessup	10
Sis. Gloria Barker	11

Happy Anniversary

To Celebrants - April & May

Bro. Rudolph & Sis. Esther Roberts	22
Bro. Elroy Christopher & Sis. Jane Thomas Christopher	27
Bro. Jeremy Francis & Sis. Rena Warner Francis	28
Bro. Adrian & Sis. Andrea Smith	14

Bible Word Search: God will provide



All the words listed below are in the puzzle - left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and click its first letter then its last letter to highlight it. After you have found all the words, click the leftover letters in to form the **mystery answer**.

Abraham,	God,	Offering,
Bethlehem,	Gold	Perfection
Blessed,	Government	Persia,
Blue,	Hope,	Promise,
Brass,	Iron,	Provision
Chariot,	Israel	Restore,
Corn,	Jerusalem	Rulers,
Crimson,	Joseph,	Saul,
Divinity,	Judgment,	Silver,
Egyptians,	Justice,	Solomon,
Esther,	Love,	Statute,
Fear,	Majesty,	Sustenance,
Flour,	Multitude,	Testimonies



- When God took one of Adam's ribs, he was...?
 - Outside the Garden of Eden
 - In a deep sleep
 - Next to the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
 - Tending the garden
 - With Eve
- God created what on the 5th day?
 - Man
 - Fowl, whales, and sea creatures
 - Beasts, cattle, and land creatures
 - Water
- How many days did God's creation take?

A. 1	C. 6
B. 5	D. 8
- God said, 'Let us make who in our image'?

A. Adam	C. Eve
B. Man	D. Animals
E. none	
- Where in the Bible does Moses attempt to sacrifice Isaac?

A. Genesis 12	C. Exodus 5
B. Genesis 22	D. Moses 10
E. None of the Above	
- What relative did Abraham try to sacrifice on an altar?

A. Daughter	C. Brother
B. Son	D. Nephew
- Who are the two people in the Bible that never died?

A. Adam & Jesus	C. Abraham & Moses
B. Elijah & Enoch	D. Elijah & Elisha
- Which was not the name of Noah's sons?

A. Shem	C. Seth
B. Ham	D. Japheth
- What did Jacob's Hebrew name mean?

A. Trickster	C. Red one
B. Supplanter	D. Of God

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Answer to Bible Trivia

1. B. Genesis 2:21
5. E
2. B. Genesis 1:21
6. B. Genesis 22
3. C. Genesis 2:2
7. B. Genesis 5:24
4. B. Genesis 1:26
8. C. Genesis 5:32
9. B. Genesis 25:26
10. Mystery Answer - Providence