



## Unity Information Newsletter

Published September December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### New Provincial Board and New Bishops Elected in Nicaragua

The Synod of the Nicaraguan Unity Province, plagued by political unrest and inner-church divisions, took place from November 4 to 8, 2019 in Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas) in the presence of 360 delegates. Important personal decisions were made. Br. Joseph Rivera (previously "Superintendent" of the Province) and Br. Rogelio Juan Zacarias were elected bishops. Br. Evenor Ismael is now the chairman of the seven-member new Provincial Board ("Junta Provincial"). Br. Rogelio Juan Zacarias and Br. Evenor Ismael are the first of the Ma-yangnas to hold these offices. As guests Br. Jørgen Bøytler, Unity Administrator and Br. Justin Rabbach from the North American "Board of World Mission" were present at the Synod.

### About 200 Women in Ordained Ministry

The November 2019 newsletter of the Unity Women's Desk put focus on Women in ministry providing insight into the work that women in ordained ministries do in almost all provinces of the worldwide Moravian Church. <https://unitywomensdesk.org/nov-2019-prayer-list/> It presents female Moravian pastors in individual portraits or in groups. And it informs: 3 Unity provinces (of 24) currently have women as Chair of Provincial Elders: Roberta Hoey of Britain, Elizabeth Miller of North America Northern Province, Phyllis Smith Seymour of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. 2 Mission Provinces (of 5) have women as chairs: Tania Sanchez in Cuba and Sara Jensen in Labrador." The ordination of women was practiced in the Moravian Church during the lifetime of Count N. L. von Zinzendorf and then again after a synod resolution of 1957.

### Cross-cultural Learning in Cuba

Three young adults from the Northern American Province report in the "Moravian Magazine" (October 2019) from their experiences participating in Cuba in this year's Summer Youth Camp and Youth Ministries. The camp, attended by 60 young people, took place for the third time in Camagüey. The theme for this year's camp was entitled ¡No Escondas Tu Luz! which means "Don't Hide Your Light!" Matthew 5:14-16. Kendra Browne writes: "If I could summarize my Moravian Cuba experience in one word, it would be humility or humildad." Kyra Tessmann writes: "Whenever we arrived at camp for the day, we were greeted with smiles, hugs and kisses from the leaders and from a lot of the kids as well." The comparative reflections of Nahum Pradhan, a camp guest from the Moravian Church in Nepal currently studying at the Moravian College, are particularly exciting to read. <https://www.moravian.org/2019/11/youth-continue-to-build-bridges-to-moravian-christians-in-cuba/>

### From the Moravian Church in Peru

The Newsletter of the Moravian Mission Society, Southern Province of the US, "ONWARD" (November 2019) gives once again a report about the Moravian work in Peru, which is working in the status of a mission area. From August 8 to 11, 2019 the second Synod / National Conference was held. Meanwhile, in addition to the congregations in Lima and Chiclayo, there are also permanent groups in Zaña and in the hard-to-reach Amazon district. As income-generating projects, the Moravian Church in Peru runs an English language school, a photo and video studio, a milk shop and a "Guinea Pig Farm" (large guinea pigs are traditionally eaten in Peru). Nine young theologians were ordained. <https://moravianmission.org/onward-november-2019/>

### Children`s Book Published in Suriname: In Search of a Better Life

A new children's book, was published on September 25, 2019 with the help of the Moravian Church in Surinam. It introduces A Chung Ko, who was born in 1956 in a poor village in the Chinese province of Guan. As a "stowaway" he travelled to Paramaribo in search of a better life via Hong Kong, Paris, Cayenne and St. Laurent du Maroni. On the beach of Albina his father took him in his arms. The multicultural country of Surinam, where there had been a growing number of Chinese contract workers since 1853, became his true home. Here he found happiness and modest prosperity. The author, Eve Huang Foen Chung, of the book entitled "Van China naar Suriname" is a descendant of the hero.

### Roselien Zamuël-Rotgans: Moravian Theologie on Mission and Winti in Suriname

Sis. Roselien Zamuël-Rotgans received a certificate on October 17, 2019, that she is now allowed to carry the title PhD. On November 15, 2019, she gave a lecture presenting her dissertation to the public. It is entitled: "The Interaction between the Mission Theology of the Moravian Church and the Traditional Surinam Afro-Religion, called Winti. Is Jesus still welcome in the hut of an Afro-Surinamer?"

### Bishop Theodor Gill Passed Away in Herrnhut, Germany

On Sunday, November 3, 2019, Br. Theodor Gill, Bishop of the Unitas Fratrum, deceased in Herrnhut. He was born on November 11, 1928 in Paramaribo, Suriname. After studying theology in Berlin, Göttingen and Basel and a probation period in Herrnhut, he was ordained a diaconus of the Moravian Church in 1955. He initially served as pastor in Herrnhut, mainly in youth work., as a lecturer at the Catechetical Seminary in Gnadau, later as director of the Gnadauer Anstalten (an institution of learning and caring for young people as well as senior citizens) and as pastor there. In 1973 he moved with his family to Herrnhut. Until shortly before his retirement, he was a member of the Provincial Board of the European Continental Province. In 1980 Theodor Gill was consecrated in Herrnhut as a bishop of the Unitas Fratrum. Br. Theodor Gill had been married to Gertraud nee Becker since 1956. They were given seven children. The Watchword on the day of Br. Theodor Gill's death was (Ps 51:17): "Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may proclaim your glory".

### Donations Needed: Combating the Drought in Zambia

Only three days after being informed by Br. Fred Walch, the project advisor of the Moravian Church in Zambia, about the terrible effects of the current drought in the country, the Moravian German Mission Help (HMH) reacted and initially provided 3,500 euros (3,900 US\$) for a first aid measure. The money will be used, already before the onset of the rainy season, to drill a deep well for water in Nakonde, then pump drinking water using a solar pump and store it temporarily in tanks. Br. Fred Walch writes: "Some people are really suffering from the lack of water, especially in remote areas. And it is to be expected to happen again next year or even get worse". Donations are requested!

### First "Moravian Women's Conference" in Assam, North India

In the most recent branch of the work of the Moravian Church in Northern India, the sisters have now organized a special meeting for the first time. They met in Binnakandi in the federal state of Assam in the very north-east of India for the "Moravian Women's Conference" from October 11 to 14, 2019. About two dozen women, most of whom already knew each other, enjoyed the fellowship, the exchange and the spiritual enrichment. In Binnakandi, Moravian sisters were already since 2016 running a small snack shop. The proceeds are used to support the local Moravian school. They do so in response to the information by Br. Titus Gangmei, teacher at the school and administrative director, that the institution was underfinanced.

### Moravian Church in North India Participates in the "Rajpur Nature Festival"

From November 2 to 4, 2019 a "Rajpur Nature Festival" took place for the first time in Rajpur near Dehradun (North India). The students of the "Moravian Institute" participated actively and with obvious enthusiasm. They took part in the public stage programme with some performances, they presented the best drawings and graphics from a school art competition on a large poster and they sold products they had made themselves in a bazaar. The school, founded in 1963 for Tibetan refugee

children, not only enjoys a good reputation in its immediate surroundings because of its pedagogical concept, but is also popular with children from far away.

#### Social Service for Immigrants "Estamos Unidos" in the Southern Province, US

A new social service is offered especially for immigrants from Central and South America by the Moravian Church in the US Southern Province. It was established by Sis. Angelica Regalado in Winston-Salem/NC in 2017 under the name "Estamos Unidos" (We are One). This ministry includes pastoral care, worship fellowship, and English language learning. There are also courses on how to handle money properly and on other topics as: How do I apply for a job correctly? What is the best way to integrate? How do I educate my children? What help is available to me? Among the children offers as homework help and after-school care as well as trying out various musical instruments are popular activities.

#### Slavery No Longer Ignored in the Museum, Netherlands

The "New York Times" published an article on October 25, 2019 about an action of the "Amsterdam Museum". The latter had redesigned its permanent exhibition in a museum wing and given it a new name. Instead of "Dutchmen in the Golden Age", the exhibition is now called "Group Portraits of the 17th Century". Margriet Schavemaker, artistic director of the museum, used the exhibition opening to explain that her museum would no longer use the term "Golden Age" for the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Netherlands was the world's leading nation. The term conceals the colonial disgrace of the Netherlands and fades out slavery. And in the Netherlands, too, the "Golden Age" was not only golden.

#### Centenarian Sister on St. John's / US Virgin Islands

One of the oldest members of the Moravian Church worldwide is Sister Pauline Louise Thomas. Living on the island of St. John in West Indies East Province the twice widowed sister celebrated her 104<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 3, 2019 with her loved ones and in good health. The newsletter of her home province dedicated a complete page to her on this occasion. Pauline Louise Thomas spent the last 20 years with her adopted son, Father Ralph Prince and his wife Rosalind. For more than 40 years she worked in the "Caneel Bay Resort" on St. John, afterwards she worked as a foster grandmother in a day care center for eleven years. In three Moravian churches she contributed greatly to the congregational life. However, there is another sister living in the Netherlands, which is a bit older, having celebrated her 104 birthday already in May. And there might be living Moravians even older.

#### Unity Prayer Watch Calendar 2020

On behalf of the Unity Board the highest body of the worldwide Moravian Church between the Unity Synods that take place only every seven years, Br. Jørgen Bøytler, Unity Board Administrator, published the calendar for the Unity Prayer Watch 2020 some time ago. It is easy to see which province should be the one to observe the Unity Prayer Watch during which period. The beginnings of the Prayer Watch date back to 1727; a resumption and organizational renewal was decided by the Unity Synod in 1957. The calendar can be downloaded from the Unity Website: [www.unitasfratrum.org](http://www.unitasfratrum.org)

#### Update on the earthquake from the Moravian Church in Albania

According the report of December 3rd, 2019: We have felt your prayers during these difficult days for our country. Thank you for being with us in this hard time, and for keeping Albania. Today we have an official response from the state, regarding the damage of the earthquake. The death toll reached 51, over 900 wounded and injured. There are 29 people still in hospitals; 26 under medical care in Albania and 3 of them who are more seriously injured, abroad. Right now, thousands of homeless people are being moved from shelters to hotels, but hundreds remain in tents and hundreds more have been taken to eastern areas of Albania, and Kosovo. The emergency state has now been declared also in Lezha and Kurbin (Lac). In prayer that the 51 people who lost their lives are now in the peace of God, providing aid to survivors has now become the focus.

3000 persons are accommodated in hotels and 1000 in state buildings, such as fitness and social centers. 3000 to 4000 have fled from their damaged areas and live with relatives. In rural areas there are 1700 people living in individual tents because they have to take care of their livestock. The evaluation of the damaged buildings has started and it will be a long process. European Union (EU)

bodies and individual countries are participating directly in the field with structural engineers, expertise and tools. There are hundreds of engineers including locals and many from Kosovo and Western Europe organized in teams checking every building. About 4000 houses are heavily damaged or ruined and less damaged more than 3000 until now. Big buildings (apartments blocks) 481 heavily damaged and 324 less damaged. A reconstruction commission has been established, with members from government, different national and international organizations, medias, engineers, constructors. Repeated aftershocks keep coming, and this makes it difficult to get over the fear and panic. This has made many to flee the areas. Even though the experts say that aftershocks are normal, people continue to be in panic. Schools are all closed, and the country is mourning. May God intervene to stop this and may our country see the light in the midst of darkness.

Regarding our church, we are thankful to witness that sisters and brothers are fine in the 6 church groups, even though in pain and despair. Dena was doing home visits yesterday in Bathore and the situation is serious. Two houses of our community are totally destroyed, but the good news is that they will be totally rebuilt by the state. They started already today, thank God. Other old houses are damaged, but considering everything we are watching around, we still say: Thank you God for being merciful with us!

Data collection: Br. Andreas Tasche, ECP, Jørgen Bøytler, UBA

Translation: Dorthea Rohde, Suriname

Editing: Jørgen Bøytler, UBA Lindegade 26, DK-6070 Christiansfeld, Denmark. Tel. +45 40361420. [boytler@ebu.de](mailto:boytler@ebu.de)