

MORAVIAN MOMENT #47...

The objective of the Moravian Church Foundation

The Moravian Church Foundation has become an example of the "Parable of the ten pounds" as reported in the Gospel according to Luke. Humble potters, carpenters and tailors left their home base in Europe to serve as Moravian missionaries in the New World. They utilized their skills as craftsmen to earn a living with their hands while dedicating the remaining time to preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. Their work was blessed.

In 1735, two German Brothers from Herrnhut, Ralph and Dehne, were commissioned to travel to Suriname without financial resources to convert the native Indians. Actually, these two Brothers, tailors by profession, are the Founding Fathers of the Moravian Church Foundation, for they started a trading company that still is one of the MCF's operational companies.

Their primary goal was to preach the Gospel. In order to provide for their costs of subsistence, they established a tailor shop. Historically both the business activities and the mission work in Suriname can be considered quite successful.

The Moravian Church became one of the most influential religious and social institutions in Suriname. After some serious initial setbacks, the small tailor shop continued in 1768 as C. Kersten & Co, that emerged not only to be one of the countries largest enterprises, but created circumstances to establish other Moravian businesses. All these Unity enterprises have been transferred to a foundation, now known as the Moravian Church Foundation.

Moravian businesses, originating in Suriname, have expanded to other countries in the Caribbean and Europe, generating not only employment, but also income for the Moravian Church Foundation to finance church work as well as social and community projects on several continents.

The objective remained unchanged: income from the enterprises is still used to finance the Moravian church and social work.

The Unity Synod has resolved that the Moravian Church Foundation should support the Moravian Unity in the following order of priority:

- Support to theological training.
- Support to the Moravian Church in Suriname for economic, educational and social work.
- The Unity Archives in Herrnhut, an annual grant.
- Unity Undertakings consisting of the work in South Asia, the Moravian Rehabilitation Centre, Star Mountain near Ramallah for the time being and the Unity Fund.
- Some other projects may be considered at the discretion of the Unity Board.

2004-present

The amount of business activities has increased considerably during the recent years, so further professionalism was highly desirable. Therefore, as of January 1st 2004, all MCF participations have been transferred to a holding company: MCF Business Enterprises B.V. Consequently there is an even stricter separation of ecclesiastical and secular matters.

The foundation is staffed and run by professional business and finance people. Its board of directors must include four elected from the church's provinces and who are particularly concerned with the ethical conduct of the foundation's businesses and its social responsibility to the communities in which it operates. Next time we will look at the Advent Star.

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