

MORAVIAN MOMENT #56...
The first Moravian Minister from Antigua

As we commemorate Black History month, it is good that we begin to examine the contribution of persons of African descent from Antigua, who have made significant contributions to the development of the Moravian Church in Antigua.

Approximately 151 years ago the first man of African descent was ordained in the Moravian Church. On January 3, 1856 John Andrew Buckley was ordained a Deacon in the Moravian Church. Who was John A. Buckley? Where was he from? What motivated him to the Ministry in what was a predominantly white domain?

John A. Buckley was born on October 20, 1818 in St. John's Antigua, as the son of John and Hannah Buckley. On December 14, 1841 he married Charity Ann Martin and together they produced 11 children. In his early years he became a Teacher and assistant Preacher at the Greenbay, Antigua. As a black person of African descent, he was very intelligent and often times amazed the Missionaries at the wisdom that he possessed. Moravian Bishop George Wall Westerby reported to the Mission Board: *Our out-post, Greenbay, is for the most part under Buckley's charge, and during the past half-year the work has advanced rapidly.*(Letter Nov. 28, 1851). Buckley himself enjoyed his work. In 1852 he wrote: *As to myself, the longer I am engaged in the work, the more I feel the constraining power of the love of Christ, so that I desire to be spent in the service of Him who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Buckley excelled in rather hostile territory. The Missionaries who were all white at the time, did not think that a black man was capable enough to be in charge of the Church. However, Buckley's wit, charm, calling and sheer brilliance, forced them to recognize his gifts and finally allowed him to exercise those gifts in the Church. Buckley was a popular preacher and so people came from near and far to hear him. The Chapel or building used for worship at Greenbay soon became too small for the number of visitors attending his services. What the Missionaries found difficult to do in years, Buckley did in six (6) months. In 1855 Buckley raised enough money within six months to add another wing to the Greenbay Chapel. It was a remarkable achievement by a black man at that time. God had laid His hand upon Buckley and there was no turning back. No obstacle placed in his way was going to stop him from being used by God.

Buckley was a pioneer for black men and women to access and to be accepted into the Ministry of the Moravian Church. It was not easy road, but God used him mightily. Was it easy for Buckley and did he survive? Learn more in the next article.

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