

MORAVIAN MOMENT #57

John Andrew Buckley, the first Moravian Minister from Antigua-part 2

John Andrew Buckley made such an impact on the population at Greenbay and the surrounding districts that the missionaries began considering to ordain him. In those years the administration for the worldwide Moravian Church was in Berthelsdorf near Herrnhut, Germany. Bishop Westerby applied for permission from the Unity Elders Conference in 1854 for Bro. Buckley's ordination. The Unity Elders Conference decided to cast lots to decide whether he should be ordained or not. The first lot came out negative. When the Unity Elders Conference attempted a year later, the lot again said no. Buckley was not deterred by the result. He saw it as a test to his faithfulness in God, for if God had called him, He would never abandon him. Finally in September 1855 an affirmative lot was drawn and Bishop Westerby was given permission to ordain Buckley.

He was ordained on January 3, 1856. His wife, Charity Ann, was received as an Acolyte the night before. He served the Moravian Church for many years in Greenbay. He was a strict disciplinarian. He stood for righteousness and he expected nothing but the highest standard from members in their daily walk with God. He wrote in 1866: *Concerning the spiritual state of the congregation, it is to be regretted that there is so little decided piety manifested, especially among the better instructed, namely the young, who have received a religious education in our schools. They are unwilling to join the Church, for fear of discipline.*

John Buckley not only cared for the spiritual state of members, he also thought it was important for them to meet their financial obligations toward the mission, which was not always easy in times of drought or unemployment. When a severe hurricane hit Antigua in August 1877, Bro. Buckley was able to give shelter to over 100 persons in the school room of the Church for two weeks.

John Andrew Buckley died on December 31, 1884 in Greenbay, after retiring in 1879. Charity Ann lived until 1906, when she died on October 18, in St. John's. To commemorate Bro. Buckley's work and the tremendous impact he had on the community of Greenbay, the street running alongside the present Sanctuary is named Buckley Street.

God can do anything but fail. God used Bro. Buckley to surmount barriers that before looked insurmountable. We thank God for the wisdom, courage, fortitude and gifts that he blessed Bro. Buckley with, so that today our Province is comprised of over 99% indigenous staff members. Bro. Buckley has left a legacy. The prayer is that God will continue to raise up men and women in this Church and like the Psalmist, *order our steps in His word.*

(sources: Periodical accounts; minutes of the Unity elders conference; register of missionaries in Antigua)

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