

MORAVIAN MOMENT #66
Moravian Music-Our Heritage(Moravian Music Sunday 2008)

The Moravian music heritage is alive and well, and for this glorious past and present gift, we thank God. The richness of Moravian music arises from the hearts of its composers, text-writers, and musicians.

People often ask, “What is Moravian music?” The answer? Music written or arranged by Moravians, or based on Moravian texts or tunes. Music, for Moravians, is the number-one way we respond to the love of God in Christ. Our first impulse is to sing – words alone can’t express the great joy we know when we feel God’s love shown to us in the life, sufferings, death and resurrection of our Savior. Listening to others isn’t enough. God has given to the Moravian Church a heart for music, and special gifts in composing music, writing words, and singing and playing from the heart.

On this Sunday, set aside for us to recognize the value that our music has played in our worship and in our lives, we are thankful that God gave us this gift, this peculiar phenomenon that certain ways of combining sounds, pitches and rhythms and words, can touch our hearts as well as our minds, can express things which mere words cannot, and can draw us closer to one another and to our God.

This year we also celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Moravian composer Christian LaTrobe. He was born on February 12, 1758, in Fulneck, England, and was the son of an English Moravian Minister, Benjamin H. LaTrobe, Sr., and an American mother, Margaret Antes LaTrobe. LaTrobe was educated in Moravian schools in Germany from 1771 to 1778, where he received sound advice on how to play an organ in church from Bishop August Spangenberg. Although he was gifted as a composer and a hymn-writer, he served the church as a missions administrator, and his legacy is contained in Moravian missions as well as music. He became well-known as a musician during his own lifetime, and he lived and worked in London, becoming friends with Haydn. He published many Moravian anthems in England, and helped our music become better known even in the early part of the 19th century.

The value of the music program in your church does not depend upon numbers. It depends upon the hearts of those involved. And the most significant part of the music program of any congregation is not its choir, or band, or even its music staff – **it’s the congregation itself**. The congregation itself is the “first choir”. The richness of Moravian music arises from the hearts of those who practice it, and in their connection to the Lord. Visitors to Moravian congregations feel this and are moved by it.

We thank God for the many composers throughout the Eastern West Indies Province who over the years have used their God given gifts to enrich God’s Church and bless His people. We especially thank God for all of our musicians who make our worship come alive and cement our faith. May the music of today’s service fill your heart and soul with gratitude for God’s gifts to the Moravian Church and with renewed dedication to service in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

April 20, 2008