

Moravian Moment #79

Understanding our heritage

An understanding the Moravian Church in different parts of the world, will give us a better appreciation of who we are as a denomination. How has the Moravian Church ministered and survived is critical for us to understand so that we use it as a platform to go forward. We will therefore examine the work in Surinam and Guyana.

Surinam is on the northeastern coast of South America. The Moravian work there began in 1735 among the African slaves. After the abolition of slavery in 1863 in Surinam, many of those freed disappeared into the jungle. To meet the shortage of labourers, East Indians and Javanese were imported. Today the work is carried out among Creoles, Bush Negroes, East Indians, Javanese and Chinese, making this the most culturally diverse province of the Unity. In recent years the work has suffered from migration of many members to the Netherlands and from political uncertainties which made the mission in the interior very difficult.

The Surinam Province is a flagship for Moravian work in so far as **Social Ministry** is concerned. The Province runs two Hospitals, 27 Polyclinics, 88 Schools, 9 Children's Homes and a Home for the aged. The Church has maintained its position in the community because of its social out reach ministry.

The Moravian work in Guyana began among the plantation slaves in 1738 and soon after extended to the Arawak Indians. After 70 years, the work in Guyana was abandoned. However, God was calling the Moravian Church to revive and reshape itself in that country again. Help came from Barbados, for in 1878 the work was revived as an offshoot of the Moravian Church in Barbados. Today, the Church in Guyana has eight congregations. The Guyana Province is affiliated to the American Provinces, who provide annual subsidies to offset the poor economic state of the church and country.

Both Guyana and Surinam are part of the Moravian Caribbean Regional Conference, which also includes Jamaica, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Eastern West Indies Province (EWIP).

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