

MORAVIAN MOMENT #80

Moravian Heritage, the Jamaica experience

The Moravian Church in Jamaica, which was established in 1754, represents a continuation of the Caribbean Moravian Mission which commenced in 1732. About 130 years after its establishment the church was formally incorporated by an act of parliament. At that time the church had a training college for ministers and a teachers college, along with several primary education institutions. The work in Jamaica was then under the supervision of the Supreme Executive Board in Britain.

The period between 1834 and 1894 can be described as the period of settlement. During this time, Moravian mission emanated from 14 centres in various parts of the island. It was not until 1891 that work in Kingston was initiated. Of particular note were the settlements for former slaves, which were attempted or established between 1834 and 1861. The character of the work today in Nazareth, the most successful of these settlements, owes much to the community initiatives of the 1840s. The fact that some 40 schools were established is a testimony to the emphasis that the Moravian Church has placed on education. The programmes of community development, which were undertaken from as early as 1769, are the precursors of the community outreach projects that Unitas of Jamaica is involved in today.

The period between 1894 and 1954 was a time of consolidation. It was during this period (1899) that the first synod was held. Prior to this the provincial meetings were referred to as conferences. Maybe the most critical factor facing the province then was the matter of financial sustainability. The period also saw an intensification of attempts to develop an indigenous clergy and local ecumenical ventures. When the 150th anniversary was observed in 1904, less than twenty-five percent of the clergy was Jamaican but that would change in the ensuing period. The complete transition to local leadership began in 1951, when the first native president of the local provincial board was elected. Today the clergy is one hundred percent Jamaican.

The Eastern West Indies Province is not only grateful to UTCWI where most of our Ministers receive their training for Ministry, but to the Jamaica Province of the Moravian Church. **The Jamaica Province has played and continues to play a most significant role in the grooming, development and growth of Ministers.** Both Provinces share much in common and the prayer is that the bonds will be strengthened in the years to come. The Moravian Church in Jamaica is the place where our Ministers were tried and tested, and where we made our mistakes and were forgiven.

Current areas of work of the Moravian Church in Jamaica include primary, secondary and tertiary education, adult education, rural agricultural development in crops and livestock, rural and urban vocational training, health clinics, inner-city youth programmes, senior citizen care and radio ministry.

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