

MORAVIAN MOMENT #94
Casting of Lots, a Moravian custom

The Moravian Church as it developed has had many customs and practices. Some of these customs and practices have died or are dormant, while others have thrived, survived and have taken on new meaning and significance. One of those customs which operated and had great spiritual significance in the Moravian Church was the Casting Of Lots. The casting of lots is a system where if a decision is to be made as to which person in a group or an organization should be chosen for a particular task or assignment, the name of all those in the organization would be placed in a box. After that is done, the Church would go into earnest prayer for God to choose the right person, so that the right name would be pulled from the box. Once a person was chosen, they gave God the highest praise (Hallelujah) for choosing the brother or sister.

The casting of lots first emerged in the Acts of the Apostles after the death of Judas. In an effort to replace him, it was felt that no human hand should be involved in the choice. "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon **Matthias**; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." (Acts 1:26). The casting of lots was seen as God's intervention in directing human affairs. The Lot was a deeply spiritual matter for the Moravian Church. The person chosen by Lots was acknowledged as God's choice and everyone accepted the decision.

In addition, Lots were cast to divide Jesus' garment after his crucifixion; "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, **casting lots**: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast **lots**." (Matthew 27: 35).

In many areas of the Moravian world, the system has become obsolete, but in the early days of the development of the Moravian Church it played a vital role in major decisions. When the young Renewed Moravian Church at Herrnhut prayed earnestly for God's direction as to the way forward for the Church, their hearts were overwhelmed with a burning desire for Souls for the Master. The Mission to win Souls for the Kingdom was laid on their hearts. The first two (2) Moravian Missionaries, Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann who came to St. Thomas from Germany, were chosen by Lots, after earnest and sincere prayer.

After 1727, during the early days of the Renewed Moravian Church, the choosing of a life partner was done by casting Lots. Single women of every age resided under the charge of an Elderess. The single men too lived under similar conditions and all speech between unmarried brethren and sisters was absolutely prohibited. The choosing of a wife or husband was not left to chance or to one's own fancy for human beings are fallible. God, the infallible one, was left to make that decision and this was done by way of casting Lots. Would that our Church continue in earnest prayer and seek God's guidance in every situation.

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