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"Canadian Women in Ministry"

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Foreword

The 18th Canadian Moravian Historical Magazine seeks to recognize and remind us of the many ways in which Women's ministry has assisted in the growth and evolving of the Canadian Moravian Church. Women have performed a vital ministry in the Church from its very beginning. Unfortunately, women have many times been the silent forces behind the forward movement of the Church. Through their teaching of Sunday School, cooking at Church camps, leaders of camps, working in the Ladies Aid or Women's Fellowship, singing in choirs, serving on boards and committees of the church, going out to the mission field as nurses and teachers, marrying pastors and supporting them in their ministry, or becoming pastors themselves, women have left a very large footprint on what is the Canadian Moravian Church.

Never are we, as members of the church, to lose sight of the role of women in the life and work of the Church. Nor should we neglect to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to these unsung heroes, who with dedication and love, stepped up to whatever the task set before them and served honorably and faithfully. God's Kingdom is the better for their undaunting service and faithfulness. Thank you ladies.

Bob Voelker
President

Ahuas, Honduras, C. A. 1952-1955

By Lorraine (Sampert) Riske

The trees in the jungle below reminded me of broccoli bunches. After crossing a river, the M. A. F. pilot pointed to a clump of buildings and said, "There is the village of Ahuas", which would become my home for three years. The plane began to descend and landed on the bumpy savannah – I felt as though I had just arrived at the end of the earth! Soon, a sea of smiling faces welcomed me with the familiar Miskitu greeting, "Naska" (Hello). This was my initiation as the new "nurs mairin" (lady nurse) at the Ahuas Clinic.

Many new and different experiences were mine as I attempted to learn a new language and adjust to another culture. Illnesses before unknown to me presented themselves (i.e. malaria, intestinal parasites, snakebites and machete wounds). I was impressed how Dr. Sam Marx treated each patient with compassion, taking time to listen with concern. Spiritual counsel was always a high priority as well.

One year measles and whooping cough struck our area. Many children died, in spite of our best efforts. We were on duty day and night, dealing with complications from these diseases.

The year Dr. Marx and family were on furlough, a young lady was brought to the clinic. She had delivered a healthy baby; however retained the placenta. She was in a weakened condition following three days of travel in the hot sun. I realized this case was beyond my capacity as a nurse, thus I kept watch over her during the night and radioed for the M. A. F. plane in the morning to fly her out to a hospital on the coast. A week later, she returned with her baby, in good health. How I praised God for His help and M. A. F.!

Always challenging were the out-patient trips to the various villages. I especially enjoyed going to Kokobila, a village on the coast, where white sand beaches were so refreshing. We stayed in native homes where we slept in hammocks or on the floor. The gracious hosts fed us well – I can still taste the good “wabul” (banana soup) and fresh coconut juice! No clocks were needed, since the roosters woke us up early in the morning (like 3 a.m.!).

The local Moravian church was a special blessing for me. Moses Bendlis, the Miskitu pastor always used practical illustrations, including drama. After learning some of the language, I didn't find the 3 hour plus services on the high, backless benches so bad.

Every Wednesday afternoon was a highlight of the week for me. The young women from the village came for Crochet Classes and Bible Study. It was a learning experience for me as well, to gain an understanding of their lives and culture.

I regard it a privilege to have lived in Honduras. I owe so much to so many people who graced my life. Dr. Sam and Grace Marx “smoothed the road” so often for me and were loved and appreciated by all. Astria Allen, my Miskitu helper and mentor, tutored me in the language and became a much loved friend. There are also the many Miskitu believers who accepted me and gave so much of themselves for my welfare. In 1977, I was able to return to Ahuas for a visit. I was glad to see improvements in the life at the village (i.e. fenced gardens, washlines for clothes and water wells). However, my greatest joy was to learn that two doctors and a number of nurses were being trained to minister to their people’s needs. I pray that the Ahuas Clinic will always be a “comfort zone” for Christ’s physical and spiritual help and healing.

The Canadian District Women’s Fellowship

The Canadian District Women’s Fellowship was formed on January 29, 1954. Its purpose was two-fold: devotion and to promote worthwhile projects. The total membership in 1954 was 218 ladies from 11 congregations. Mrs. Edith Riske was the first president. Rallies and workshops were held yearly. The final president was Mrs. Betty Voelker and in 1986, 55 ladies attended the district event. The district organization was dissolved following the 1987 Ladies Conference in Edmonton. Various congregational women’s groups have existed prior to 1954 and continue operate in the present day.

Currently there are active Women’s Fellowship groups functioning at the following churches: Millwoods, Rio Terrace, Heimtal, Christ Church.

One Little Leap At A Time

By Eleanor (Ellie) Stebner

In August of 1981 I boarded a plane with numerous other young people from the Canadian District. We were headed to La Guardia airport, the first stop on our way to a youth convocation to be held at Myrtle Beach. It was unbelievably hot and humid on our landing in New York City and the airport was loud and bustling with a kind of energy that overwhelmed the senses. I remember a moment when I thought, "hmmm, maybe I should get back on a plane and return to Edmonton." The instant was fleeting yet I was aware of it because this was not simply a trip from which I would return in a week or two, it was a step toward the unknown or, as Kierkegaard put it, it was a "leap of faith." With one small suitcase and a knapsack, I knew that when the others returned to Alberta I would remain in Bethlehem and begin studies at Moravian Theological Seminary (MTS).

My decision to study at MTS appeared sudden to most friends and family but it had been brewing. Certainly my undergrad years at what was then Concordia College and at the University of Alberta fueled my intellectual curiosity and gave me scholastic confidence in the study of history, theology, and biblical studies. Certainly my birth into the Moravian tradition was important: my great-great grandfather, Ludwig Klapstein, a son of German colonists in Poland and a teacher and Moravian diaspora worker before moving to Volhynia in the

early 1880s and then on to Canada in 1890, was the founding “father” of the Heimtal Moravian Church; his youngest daughter, Julia Adam, my great-grandmother was a midwife in the Strathcona area and known for her various healing skills; my grandparents, Elsie and Fred Stebner and my father, Dennis, were all active in the church.

Familial history and the nurturing received from the Heimtal and Edmonton Moravian communities influenced my desire to live a life of service. Experiences at Camp Van Es as camper and counselor, teaching Sunday school, and playing in brass ensembles added other dimensions to my decision to pursue ministerial training and ordination. Last but not least, the Moravian community in Alberta, while somewhat of a subculture in the 1960s and 1970s, was not insular but instilled – through visiting missionaries, guests from various places, and educational programs – an understanding of a global world, an expansive world beyond provincial and national borders.

Yet in hindsight the decision for me – as a young Canadian woman – to go seminary was a fascinating choice. As a teenager I had listened and watched carefully the oft-heated debates about women in ministry and whether or not it was theologically defensible to ordain them (us). This was not because Moravians did not recognize or even applaud the ministry of women as missionaries, teachers, musicians, and providers of physical and spiritual care. The question of the ordination of women, however – the setting apart of women to officially engage in religious rites and rituals as official representatives of a religious institution – was part of larger cultural conversations about the place of women within family

and society, and elicited disparate understandings of biblical interpretation, tradition, and authority.

The Moravian Church in North America adopted a guarded and careful approach to the decision of women's ordination, its leaders not wanting to alienate or offend its members who stood solidly against it. While the international Unity Conference approved the possibility of provinces deciding on the matter in 1957 it was not until 1970, after the two mainstream Lutheran denominations in the U.S. approved the ordination of women, that the Northern Province followed suit.ⁱ Five years later, the Northern Province ordained its first woman. A huge leap had been taken. At the time I was approved as a ministerial candidate and entered studies at MTS, only six women had been ordained.ⁱⁱ Most significant to the Canadian District was Blair Couch who, in 1978, came to the Rio Terrace church as an assistant pastor.

My three years at MTS provided solid education in the areas of theology, biblical studies and languages, church history, pastoral care, and preaching. It was an exciting time to engage in such studies: liberation and feminist theologies were being articulated in energizing ways, discussions about "inclusive" language in worship abounded, and the nascent field of women in religious history was emerging. Questions of how to do social ministry and strive toward a more just society continued the Moravian tradition of engagement with the world but gave it a different slant. Particular professors pulled out and promoted my interests, such as David Schattschneider, who was a mentor and had a long-term impact on the direction of my life.ⁱⁱⁱ

We all also worked as student pastors within congregations during the academic year and in the summer: I was grateful to have had as pastoral supervisors Gary Harke, when he was at the Moravian church in Easton, and Larry Christianson, when he was at the Moravian church in Canton, Michigan. ^{iv} Friendships between students who then became colleagues started at MTS, and my years there overlapped with people such as Murray Laverty, Wendy and Rick Beck, Steve Gohdes, Carol Volger, and Betsy Miller.

Was it significant that in those years MTS had no woman faculty member? The all-male faculty was good and dedicated, and students did have able – older and wiser – female “role models,” such as Margaret Wilde (née Weingarth), who informally took students under their tutorage. Did having a good handful of women students change the atmosphere of the school and its understandings of ministry? Perhaps, but MTS was gifted at building community and upheld a holistic education in developing the leadership skills of its students, regardless of gender, age, or race.

I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1984 and was called to serve a Moravian church in Indianapolis. Due to complications with the American Immigration Naturalization Services, I was not able to return to Edmonton for my ordination but was ordained in the Saal of MTS by Bishop Wil Behrend with Douglas Kleintop presiding. My godparents, Art and Mary Lange, were present and I was thankful that they also represented the support of the Canadian District.

I spent less than two years as pastor of the Indianapolis church. The people were a delight and I learned much from the mostly elderly congregation – they exuded a spirit that was crusty, honest, and faithful. They liked having a young woman pastor! When more conservative churches and denominations in the area made disparaging remarks about their woman pastor, they rose to defense. And when a man spit on me – after he found out that I was a pastor (in his words, “a woman is not allowed to teach a man”) – while waiting in line at the post office to mail the monthly newsletter, they shuddered at such deep prejudice. With their encouragement and blessing I decided to pursue additional graduate education. It was another leap. Studying for a second master’s degree at Marquardt University while working a pastoral job with a Presbyterian church (and serving a small rural Moravian congregation) led to the decision to pursue a doctorate at Northwestern University.

Academic positions were very scarce in those years and I fully expected to return to pastoral ministry. I was offered, however, a part-time job teaching church history at Chicago Theological Seminary while I was completing my dissertation, which I accepted. This in turn led, after I received my Ph.D, to a position teaching theology and church history at the University of Winnipeg.

Continuing to live without “a plan” but relying on both internal and external nudges took me, after more than a decade in Winnipeg, to Simon Fraser University. In this work I engage with undergrad and graduate students of all backgrounds in the study of ideas and texts related to

religion, and with community people on how humans might build a more compassionate and just world. While I have not served in pastoral ministry for over two decades, the church considers my work as “specialized ministry,” in other words, as extending the mission of the church beyond its walls.

It did not occur to me in 1981 that I was the first woman from the Canadian District to study at MTS and seek ordination. My decision to do so was neither a symbolic statement nor a gesture to prove anything ideological about women in church and society. It was simply a response to the life I was given. I could not know when I disembarked at La Guardia – and decided not to jump the next plane back to Edmonton – where this decision would take me. But it has been an amazing thirty years, one little leap at a time.

¹¹ The Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the American Lutheran Church (ALC) merged to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1988.

¹ Mary Matz (1975), Blair Couch, Carol Foltz and Virginia Goodman (1978), and Rebecca Behrend and Kay Ward (1979).

¹ David Schattschneider retired as professor church history and dean in 2001.

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¹ David Schattschneider retired as professor church history and dean in 2001.

To Be Or Not To Be?

By Trina Holmberg, class of 2009

“To be or not to be” is a famous quote and one that describes my life in many ways. To be or not to be Moravian? To stay a librarian or to go to school? To remain in Alberta or travel to Pennsylvania? These are a few of the choices I faced.

In some ways my Moravian roots do not go very deep. Now, however, I would say that my roots have grown very deep. I first found the Bruderheim Moravian church in 1987. It has been an interesting and frustrating journey but one I am glad I did not miss.

My initial thoughts of the Bruderheim Moravian Church, was of a congregation that cared about the community. They were hosting the scouts as they celebrated Lord Baden Powell Day. Two people entered as Lord and Mrs. Powell. I was impressed with their incorporation of them into the service. The people were friendly and I thought this might be a good place to worship. We were loved into the congregation and my daughter was baptized in the fall of 87. I was impressed by their openness and the fact that no one pushed me to be a member. I enjoyed learning about the history of the denomination and was impressed with their foundation.

Many years before in the Nazarene church I had begun reading scripture during church and many told me I

should become a pastor. I dismissed them as crazy or at least not understanding that preaching was more than a good reading voice. Those thoughts never left me, but I was in no position to act on them nor did I really have the desire.

As I grew in faith and self-esteem surrounded by these Moravians the call began returning. I wasn't sure I wanted to listen because I enjoyed being an involved lay member. I even gave up a chance to bring a message to the congregation (I felt I really didn't have much to share). I eventually returned to school to obtain my Bachelor degree in psychology (I never thought of changing my major to religion). After graduation I looked at a pamphlet for seminary with great fear. The words such as hermeneutics and exegesis were very strange and unwelcoming to me. I prayed that God would not send me in that direction and then I prayed that God would take away my fear so that I would be able to go wherever God led. My daughter had asked me not to return to school until she turned 18 (five years away) this was comforting for the moment.

I met my husband a couple of years after graduating and wonderful discussions of possible futures occurred. The thought of a wife as pastor did not scare him. Soon after we were married I began attending a local seminary. Being that neither of us had grown up Moravian we used a move into Edmonton to allow the Lord to show us within which denomination we were to minister.

Heimtal Moravian in South Edmonton, became that place of feeling loved, welcomed and called by God to serve.

Helping with worship and preaching there set in motion the application process for candidacy within the Moravian church. Several people said with smiles that it was about time. Their prayers, encouragement and support helped us to choose to finish my M.div. in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

God blinded us to a couple of issues (such as thinking housing would be paid, and what Ken would do since he may not be able to work) but eventually we found ourselves in a completely new world. The Moravians were different and the same in Bethlehem. Life was similar but different. The chaplain at the time (who had served in Alberta) talked of the difference like wearing two different shoes with only a small difference in the heel. You can walk okay but it is a little uncomfortable. To help us adjust we took a trip home to see children and grandchildren over Christmas and were then able to settle into seminary life.

I learned a lot more about Moravians and the differences between each region. Wonderful friendships grew where we could share our frustrations and hopes. I realized how different we all were and yet we there was a unity between us too.

After two years of schooling in Bethlehem, PA graduation loomed ahead. The ordination Review Committee gave their stamp of approval which was accepted by the PEC. It was exciting to think that life was forever changing and that where ever God called we would go. My first call came a very short time later - the excitement was great - but the next day came the need to accept that Canada would not be our home for many years. We were almost overwhelmed. Meeting with the people with whom I would lead, worship and follow was

amazing. We would grow in faith together and support one another.

I am thankful to God who kept the desires alive in me to follow where I was called. I am thankful for the people who have cheered me on and for the gift of a husband who embraced such an adventure. I am also thankful for those blind moments that allowed for movement that wouldn't have happened otherwise.

As I have become more deeply rooted in the Moravian way of being Christian I am more excited about being a part of what God is doing with us and through us. I may not always agree but I do know that we are trying to let God lead us into greater and greater works for him. I shall not fear for God is with me and I will continue to serve in this denomination that has become my home. I choose to be what and where God has called me.

Why Go To Alaska

By Gladys (Kittlitz) Bartz

The word was out to all the churches that a teacher was needed for the lower grades at the Children's Home near Bethel, Alaska. After much deliberation and prayer, I accepted the challenge and left Edmonton for Alaska on August 2, 1956 for a term of three years. This was definitely a new adventure for me and I must say that I was full of anxiety – not really knowing what experiences I would encounter. A promise of assurance I took with me was Philippians 4:9, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

My air flight took me to Seattle, then to Anchorage and finally to Bethel, Alaska. In Seattle I met up with Fran Heutter, who was returning to Alaska after a brief visit home. It was good to have a travelling companion and Fran filled me in about what it was like living at the Children's Home, Bethel, and some of the many nice people I would meet and work with.

Serving as missionaries when I arrived, there were: Charles B Michael (Supt.) and his wife Dorothy, Douglas Schattschneider (Treasurer) and his wife Grace. Clarence Henkelman (Supt. Of Children's Home) and his wife Pauline, John and Marion Braun (Parents at the Boys' Dormitory), Frances Heutter (Matron and Substitute Teacher), Clara Cooper (Housekeeper), Constance Sautbein (Teacher), Wilton and Cecilia Schwanke (Kwigillingok), Samuel and Edith Vaughn (Bethel). Don and Lillian Schmidt came to the Boys' Dorm when the Brauns returned home and Mary Jeane Moser

served as matron when Fran was on furlough. Ken and Marie Peterson were at the Boys' Dorm after the Schmidts left.

Some of my first impressions were overwhelming. Before school started in September, I spent a few days in Bethel and attended a Bible Conference. Native people from neighboring villages and fish camps attended. They all looked alike to me with their brown faces, black eyes and hair. How would I ever remember who was who and they had such a strange sounding language. Even the names of the villages they called home were hard to pronounce. I didn't learn much of the language as most of the children spoke English. My sense of smell was invaded with the strong odor of fish that lingered with the people and was most prevalent at the assemblies. It seemed almost unbearable at the time, but I guess I got used to it and hardly noticed it after awhile.

Travelling by boat, "The Messenger II" from Bethel to the Children's Home, took us up the Kuskikwim River, Church slough, the Kuskoquaque River and finally the Kwethluk River. I felt in awe of the vast bareness of the tundra and the isolation of the villages and wondered at how the very first missionaries must have felt. The rivers were and are the roadways.

There was the usual warm welcome at the Home upon my arrival and as the weeks went by I settled in to my duties. There was always something new and different to learn as well as to give of myself.

The buildings on the campus were connected with a boardwalk. Nearest to the river was the Boys' Dorm.

Next a little guest cabin, the pretty Scwalbe Chapel, the diesel house, the Superintendent's House and last of all the Girls' Dorm. Well off to the side, beyond the chapel, was a workshop and a Quonset hut used for storage. Oil stoves were used for cooking and some of the heating. There were still two wood furnaces in use. A diesel plant supplied the necessary power and water was pumped through pipes from the river to large storage tanks in the basements of the buildings.

The food supply for children and staff was purchased mainly from the West Coast Grocery in Seattle and came to Bethel twice a year by ship. Supplies were unloaded at Bethel onto a barge which brought them to the Children's Home. Everyone had a hand in the unloading and putting things in their rightful places. It was possible to have a garden and greenhouse there. The vegetables grew well in the long summer days and were prepared for the freezers. Fish canning and smoking were also done. Some King salmon weighed up to 60 lbs. Fresh salmon was delicious! The men and boys were allowed to set nets out to catch them. I remember when the first fish (smelt) of the season were running after the ice was gone. It was an exciting time and everyone tried their hand at catching them by dipping a large net into the water and scooping them up and putting them in large washtubs. Sometimes this was done at night when the fish were running. By this time daylight was nearly round the clock, so we could do this. We would build a bonfire and roast some right then and there. The smelt was mostly dried, stored and fed to the dogs. In the fall we picked wild berries on the tundra – mostly blueberries. We had to wear mosquito netting for these outings or suffer the bites of insects. In the winter we also had moose meat which we froze and also processed. It was given to the Home by the Fish and Wildlife Association.

There were about 35 to 40 children in residence at the Home during my term. Only one or two may have been orphans. Many were placed there by welfare agencies – others by their parents. In such cases, perhaps one or both parents were away in hospitals receiving T. B. treatment, so while the children were at the Home, the staff members tried to provide, as much as possible, a real home atmosphere for them. One's duties then were really quite varied. Sometimes you were a supervisor, a nurse or a mother to them. The children were taught a lot of homemaking skills from taking turns at cooking, washing dishes, baking, cleaning, washing, ironing and mending clothes.

The upper grade classroom was in the Girls' Dorm and the lower grade classroom was on the third floor of the Boys' Dorm. School was held during the week. On Sunday we had Church and Sunday School. The staff shared duties of play supervision on Sunday afternoons and during the week. Often there were visitors from neighboring villages. Some activities were planned for most every evening. These included classes of sewing, cooking, woodworking, scouts, extra Sunday School classes, choir and a store night. The children were given an allowance, part of which went for Sunday offering and the rest was used to buy candy, pencils, paper, small toys and other articles of interest that were sent to us by various church groups. Saturday was bath night.

Every child had an "outfitter" – some interested church group or family that sent clothes for one child. Other clothing that was sent was also used for the children and needy families from surrounding villages. Most of the

clothes were stored in the attic of the Girls' Dorm. We used to refer to it as our department store.

Not all of my students were native. Some were children of the staff and some were a mixed race (white and native). I remember only a few that came to the Home that couldn't speak English. I taught the U. S. curriculum with revisions made suitable for the needs of the children.

Some of the children who graduated from the eighth grade went on to attend either Mount Edgecumb Jr. College or Sheldon Jackson Jr. College in Sitka. A lot of prayers went with them since they had never been so far from home before and could very easily be led into bad habits with the wrong friends.

Travel to and from Bethel and other villages in summer was by boat, mail plane or other small float planes. In winter we travelled on the frozen river or across the tundra by dog-sled, tractor and wagon or small airplanes. Going by dog-sled through bush trails and on the tundra was beautiful on sunny days and evenings in the moonlight. Some people were able to afford snowmobiles in later years. The Home had sled dogs. The men and boys looked after the care and feeding of them. I remember some Sundays in the winter when another staff member and I would go off for a ride on the dog-sled (driven by one of the older boys) and then stop, build a fire and have a winter picnic of roasted wieners, hot coffee or cocoa. Imagine a picnic at -25F!

It did get very cold sometimes -40F. The Schwankes invited me to spend Christmas vacation with them my first year. I flew over to Kwigillingok in the mail plane. While there a blizzard set in for a week or more. What a storm!

Everything was white and bleak. We felt so isolated. The plane couldn't return to pick me up until the weather cleared. I was late getting back to the Home for school opening after the holidays.

Visitors were always a welcome change for staff members and the children. Often hospital and teaching staff from Bethel would come for a day or a weekend. Holidays were always looked forward to and made special, including birthdays, ice break-up and July 4th. We had a good number of picnics at a place called "Birch Hill". We all travelled there on a barge pushed by the boat. Often we would take the makings for home-made ice cream (canned milk) along with us and make it on the hill. Ice was found along the river bank nearby that had some exposed perma-ice. The boys would chip some of this ice for our ice cream freezers. The children and staff took turns turning the handle until the ice cream was ready.

The view from the hill was fantastic and awesome. You could see for great distances in every direction.

During the summer months activities included such things as gardening, fishing, D. V. B. S. at the Home, in villages or fish camps and "Young Ambassadors" Camp -held at the Home for the first time in 1958. Approximately 50 to 60 young people did attend and had a wonderful time. When D. V. B.S. was held at the villages or fish camps usually two staff members would go to conduct the school. If no buildings were available we had to take along two big army tents and all our supplies and food for the week. One summer, Gladys Fancher (a teacher from Bethel) accompanied me on the D. V. B. S. tour. I remember it rained a lot and we had to conduct classes in the tents. We wore our rain gear the whole time.

Another year Fran Heutter and I did the D. V. B. S. tour. I can still remember the scenes of the fish camps with the tents and racks and racks of drying fish and the women working at preparing them. Teaching here brought us closer to the people in understanding them and in witnessing to them.

In the winter sometimes when Rev. Henkelman visited his up-river villages he would take other staff members with him. On such trips we would meet new and old friends and visit them in their homes. It was a nice experience for me.

Other times that we associated with the people of the villages were Christmas Candlelight, Lovefeast and Sunday School program services. We baked hundreds of Lovefeast buns. The services were beautiful. The people loved to sing. Some brought their guitars and services were often lengthy. Village choirs came to sing any day, any time. People came for baptisms. People came for July 4th celebrations and about 200 came for a special reunion weekend in 1957 for all those who had lived at the Home at one time or another.

There always seemed to be something going on – even two weddings were held at the Home while I was there.

My second summer was spent in Fairbanks attending the University summer session. Here were new sights to see, new experiences to be had and new friends to be made. At this time in history Alaskans voted in favor of statehood and entered the union as the 49th state on January 3, 1959. That summer of 1958 Alaskans dyed the China River gold and flew a 50 foot gold star over the city plus staging an interesting parade.

A new church was built at Bethel and dedicated in September 1958. Dr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Drebert were able to return to Alaska for a visit and attend the dedication services.

It was always encouraging to see young men enter the Bible Seminary at Bethel. "We build a new tomorrow on plans we make today," has surely been true for the Moravian mission progress in Alaska over the many years that have gone by since work was started there in 1885.

I am happy to have had a small share in the work at the Children's Home and my hope and prayer has always been that my just being there may have helped someone and made a difference in their life for the good.

Women In Ministry

By Hazel Schattschneider Magnussen

What do we mean when we talk about ministry?

The word *ministry* is derived from the Greek word, *diakoneo* meaning *to serve*, and is used to describe government departments serving the public. In the religious context, *ministry* is a vital part of the Christian life. Often, the term refers to those called and ordained as ministers in the church.

We minister or serve in many ways. Apostle Paul, in his letters to churches in Rome (Romans 12: 4-8) and Corinth (I Corinthians 12: 1-12) identified spiritual gifts including wisdom, faith, service, teaching, hospitality, encouragement, giving, administration, showing mercy. When we discover and use our spiritual gifts, ministry comes naturally.

What then is women's ministry? How has it changed in the last 60 years? How is it different from men's ministry?

Women are now pastors, serve on church boards and even become premiers -- positions that were once filled only by men. Traditions have changed and women and men now share and work together in similar forms of ministry.

Nevertheless, there are ministries that come more naturally for many women. After all, women bear children and often are primarily responsible for nurture and caregiving in their families and communities. In an oral history project for a Moravian history course while studying at Moravian

Seminary in spring of 1986, I interviewed three women in the seminary community---two women whose husbands were studying at the seminary, one from Surinam, the other from Tanzania, and the third, a single woman from Denmark who had worked in a ministry for lepers in Tanzania. From three different continents, they spoke about caregiving for frail members in their community and nurture and education of its children. Their stories highlighted a common theme in women's experience anywhere, anytime.

For some women, a call to mission service or work in the church has meant postponing marriage and having children. They also may work for lower wages. An article in *The Moravian* magazine, May 1960¹ reported that of 63,945 women graduates from representative colleges and universities throughout the United States, the 370 who went into full time religious work received salaries 20 % less than their classmates.

My story:

Growing up in the Heimtal congregation of the Canadian District of the Moravian Church, I was inspired by missionary nurses' stories. Relatives Douglas and Grace Schattschneider, missionaries in Alaska, told me about the need for nurses in Bethel, located on the Kuskokwim River in southwestern Alaska where Moravians began mission work in 1885. So in January 1965, four months after graduation from nursing school, I began work as a staff nurse at the United States

¹ "Women in Religious Work", *The Moravian* 105(5), May 1960, p. 28.

Public Health Service Alaska Native Hospital in Bethel.

My innocence, optimism and idealism were about to be tested. Nursing in this northern setting challenged my skills and advanced my knowledge. I adapted quickly to the clinical demands and learned about the traditions and lives of the local people who worked at the hospital. Assisting with church activities such as summer camp, Sunday and Vacation Bible School helped me feel more at home as I connected with families in the community. Ministry was and is a relationship in which all parties are touched. As a government employee, I received a good salary that enabled me to continue my studies in northern nursing when I returned to Canada. I've recently published a short book, *Go North, Young Woman, Go North*, about my northern nursing experience in the 1960's.

In the years following my northern sojourn, I worked in community, mental health and long term care settings. In staff nurse and coordinator positions, I was privileged to walk with persons dealing with chronic, debilitating and sometimes terminal conditions. But it was the politics of health care that wore me down.

My sense of purpose was renewed when I undertook further study in theology and ethics in the mid 1980's. I recognized that nurses' stress (including my own) was an ethical matter, when we weren't able to fulfill our moral duties because of constraints in the system. Increased technology in health care created new ethical issues. Unfortunately, nurses weren't considered moral agents and often not given a voice in moral discussions even though they were often most familiar with their patient's needs and wishes. The powers that be in health

care weren't ready to address these matters. So, while working in short term nursing positions, I continued writing and offered occasional educational sessions to raise awareness and support nurses in their practice.

I learned the importance of taking time apart to nurture my soul and body. Silent retreats in Catholic Retreat Centres provided space and direction for contemplative prayer--resting in God's presence and care and opening to God's spirit. During those years, I had the privilege of serving on the District Board and Mission Board. As a single woman, I had mobility to take on projects away from home including short trips to Jamaica, Labrador and Honduras on behalf of the church. I was on the move, and a bishop once suggested that perhaps I was called to a ministry on the move.

In 1987, in a feminist theology course, I wrote:

I am a woman

a woman in ministry

a single woman in ministry.

I am a woman of faith

a woman seeking to know and experience God

a woman seeking to know myself and others.

I am a woman in the midst of change

a woman whose consciousness has been raised

a woman in the process of growth and transformation.

I am a woman with gifts

a woman with unique opportunities to lead and to serve

a woman who is a co-creator with God in the

*transformation of our world.
I am a woman on a pilgrimage
a woman seeking water in the desert
a woman seeking to meet other pilgrims along the
way.*

In 1994, I moved to British Columbia to coordinate preceptorship clinical assignments for student nurses at the end of their college nursing program. During that time, I met Lloyd. We were married in 1996 and now live on Vancouver Island. Of course, my priorities changed as I adapted to my new role but with Lloyd's encouragement, I continue to minister in small ways in my community.

I left the nursing workplace in 2000 after the murder of my brother, Doug, in 1999. I already knew that writing was helpful in drawing attention to issues and advocating for change, and was given grace to write Doug's story. Describing his passion for medicine and work as a country doctor and naming the issues leading up to his death and the criminal justice process was an empowering experience.

One of life's spiritual tasks is to integrate and discover the meaning of personal losses and joys in our lives. As we age, our priority is to care for ourselves, loved ones, look out for neighbours and share what we have learned with those who will listen. I am currently writing about the moral work of nursing to encourage students and practicing nurses in their practice. My passion for nursing has not waned, but fuels my hope that the profession will flourish as nurses continue to make a difference in the lives of others.

As I reflect on my own journey, I give thanks for the women who have ministered to me in many ways and places. I did not follow my elders' paths as farm women but will be forever grateful for their example imbedded in my own journey. I have not borne or raised children nor experienced the loss of children as my grandmothers did, but the mothering metaphor for nursing fits for me.

My greatest joy and greatest burden, nursing has given my life meaning and purpose. Honoured to walk with others on sacred paths, I am grateful for mercy and compassion--gifts of God's healing Spirit that guide and sustain us along the way.

Questions for reflection:

What are the gifts do your bring to your ministry?

In your home and family?

In your workplace?

In your community?

In your church?

How has your ministry changed as circumstances in your life change, and as you pass through stages of life?

Memories Of The Fifth Interprovincial Women's Conference

By Betty Voelker

Into everyone's life come events we would rather forget and others we hope we will never forget. For me, one of those "never forget" events started in 1984, April 25-27, in Ephraim, Wisconsin.

As President of the Moravian Women's Fellowship, Canadian Region, I attended the Provincial Women's Board meeting. (Darlene Nehring also attended.) We had a solid day and a half of business concerning all of the Women's fellowship groups in North America and Canada.

The most exciting time came when we talked about the Interprovincial Moravian Women's Conference. We all delved into the huge stack of evaluations from the previous Women's Conference. We saw a resounding "Yes" in those papers to have the next conference in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Not in a resort! One of the two speakers some of us had been discussing back home, was also mentioned in the evaluations.

Darlene and I came home to do a selling job for the conference. Ladies, do you remember hearing "we're not Bethlehem or Winston Salem", "we're too small a group to do this"? BUT! With God's help and guidance we undertook the planning of the:

**FIFTH INTERPROVINCIAL MORAVIAN WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE
"BRING ME TO FULL BLOOM"
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA
JUNE 24-28, 1987**

Darlene and I talked about what we wanted to come out of this conference. In past conferences most, if not all, presentations were made by white North Americans or Europeans. Beyond a doubt the Lord led us to the decision of having ALL groups led by women from Third World Countries or Countries under oppression. It was time we learned from THEM. Our counterparts, from the Southern Province, Susie Hauser and Ann Hemrick, agreed with us, as did our local planning committee.

Our division of labor was something like this: Susie and Ann took care of organizing what the Southern Province would do at the Conference. I looked after communications because we wanted one source for all information. My other task was arranging transportation to and from Edmonton for women from Third World Countries as well as their travel and health insurance. Darlene was in contact with our Southern Province people, Lister Hall (pre-conference), the Pacific -Southwest and the person to go to if any of our committee leaders had questions. I know there was a lot that Darlene did behind the scenes. She made it possible for me to concentrate on my tasks. Darlene was the person who pulled the parts of our Conference together.

I must tell you of a pre-conference incident, which could have annoyed me, but I really found quite funny! Darlene was well known to one person in our Provincial Women's Fellowship office in Bethlehem but I was an unknown 'entity'. When it was decided that, in fact, the conference would be held in Edmonton that person approached Darlene and asked if I could be trusted with the funds carried over from the previous Interprovincial Women's Conferences! Eventually, this person and I met and I passed the test. Thanks for vouching for me, Darlene! (Besides, wasn't it Marg Adam that spent all the money??)

Not all women who participated in the planning belonged to a Women's Fellowship Group and we were happy to have all who were interested in helping with the 18 committees.

Do you remember assisting these committee leaders?

Banners and Art Work –Carol Klapstein

Dorm Hostess –Ruth Prochnau

Ethnic Evening –Meta Cerezke

Flowers –Leona Perrault

Gift Shop –Judi Hicks

Housing –Becky Prochnau

International Women –Marta Laverty

Interest Groups –Mary Lange

Lovefeast Trays –Walter Wudel (oops, a man snuck in)

Music –Beverley Kadatz and Wilma Redberger

Registration Desk –Eleanor Wudel

Roster, Tapes, computer printouts –Ruth Humphries

Tote Bag making –Irene Harke

Tote Bag stuffing –Evelyn Steinbach

Tours –Marlene Fenske

Transportation –Carol McEachern
 Treasurer –Margaret Adam
 Worship –Daisy Dreger

Darlene and I never had to worry if a job was going to be done. These were dedicated people who helped make this conference a success.

Interlude: Susie, Ann, Darlene and I had our pictures, and an article on the Conference, in the June-July 1985 copy of the North American Moravian Magazine.

In 1985 I wrote to Dr. Anne Marguerite Squire asking her to be our guest speaker for the Conference. Between that time and the Conference in '87 Dr. Squire had become the first female Moderator of the United Church of Canada. In spite of her new role she still honored her commitment to us.

In all of our communications we made it clear what the requirements were for entry into Canada from all parts of the world. We encouraged women to come before the conference, or stay after, so they could take a trip to our Rockies with Royal Tours. Our women opened their homes to strangers, before and after the conference, because some of them would not be able to afford the extra expense of staying in the dorm.

We asked for financial help to bring many of the women to this Conference as they had no money from their Province, nor could they afford it themselves. Funds came from:

- Board of World Missions
- Bruderheim Ladies Aid

- Canadian Regional Women's Fellowship
- Circle #7 Women's Fellowship - Winston-Salem, NC
- Heimtal Women's Fellowship
- Mission Society - Winston-Salem
- Moravian Gift and Bookshop – Southern Province
- Star Craft - Edmonton
- Funds from the previous Women's Conference
- As well as many individual donations

In a letter from Stephen Hishey in 1985 he mentions: "The possibility of making a visit to Canada after a long gap of 10 years is indeed exciting...as well as renewing old friendships".

The cost of bringing Stephen, Susie and their two boys was beyond their means. In a letter from Elmer Kadatz, President, Canadian District Executive Board, he states: "The Moravian Church in Canada hereby invites Stephen Hishey, Susan Hishey and their children Isaac and Joshua...to attend the Women's Conference... and guarantee that all and any expenses will be born by us while they are our guests in Canada." As always, our District came through and enough money was raised to cover all costs!! (Another testimony that our denomination may be small but we are a mighty force!)

Do you remember the beautiful carpets that were for sale? They were all made by the ladies in Ladakh, India to raise money for their Moravian Boarding School. (Bill Brese looked after the arrangements for the carpets.)

Our Canadian Moravians had a special bond with the Hisheys. Stephen had been a Student Pastor with the Rev. Kurt Vitt. The Ordination of Stephen, into the Ministry of our Moravian Church, held at Heimtal, was a joyous occasion. So, to have them with us again was very special.

our Moravian Church, held at Heimtal, was a joyous occasion. So, to have them with us again was very special.

Following the Women's Conference Stephen and family stayed with us. We didn't have to feed them much as other people had them over for meals!! The boys couldn't believe that they could each have their own towel and washcloth and could take a shower by themselves – every day!!! Well, Stephen had the boys share one towel!

Friday, June 19, 1987, Darlene had gone to Lister Hall (one of her strings). She called me concerning one of the ladies from Indianapolis who wasn't feeling well. I went over that afternoon and found Julia, a very sick diabetic, who had made the trip by train from Indiana to Washington, then into Canada to Edmonton on Tue. June 16th. (She and her friend had had a wonderful trip.)

I said she needed to go to the hospital right away. As God would have it, a friend of mine from Wisconsin was right across the hall. She got Julia down to my car. I drove her across the street to the new University Hospital and waited until I could talk to a medical person. They said Julia was lucky to not have gone into a coma. (She thoroughly enjoyed her time in what she called a hotel. As a teaching hospital Julia had lots of people hovering over her and she allowed them whatever access they needed!)

Interlude: Are you ready for two "God Moments"??

I was able to see Julia before leaving and she told me she had come early to go on the Rockies tour. She asked if there was anyone who could use her ticket. I said there was someone but she wouldn't be able to pay for it. Julia didn't want any

money for it she just wanted it used. I returned home and asked Ruth, from Guyana, S. America, if she would like to go on the tour. She said she only had \$40.00 she had smuggled out of her country in her Bible. (When's the last time you had to smuggle money out of Canada?) When I told her about Julia's generosity Ruth cried tears of joy. We unpacked her HUGE suitcase and filled one of my smaller ones with the necessities.

Saturday morning we met the bus at Lister Hall. We went on-board and I turned Ruth over to Margaret Wilde. The tour guide was willing to take Ruth without travel insurance until I was able to arrange for it as soon as Royal Tours opened. At the first stop the travel agent called the office to check on the insurance and all was well!!

However, that's not the end of Ruth's story. When the tour was over people came to tell me all about the trip. (Ruth's not the only one who was excited about having been along.) When they were in Banff it was Ruth's birthday. Some of our people arranged for a celebration at the restaurant where a whole group of Japanese tourists took pictures, then our group passed the hat, so to speak, and Ruth came back with \$75.00!!! Now, she would be able to buy something from the gift shop as a remembrance of her time in Canada. This happened outside of the planning committee! WOW! GOD must have done some of His own planning.

Devotional Thoughts" were written for each day of the Conference: Wednesday, Fay M. Thomas, Eastern District; Thursday, Trudy Knipple, Mid-West; Friday, Evie Berling, Middle District; Saturday, Benigna Zibi, Africa.

There was early registration on June 23, 1-5 and 6-9. We were busy! I don't know what we would have done without Charlie Hemrick, Ann's husband, who took more baggage to rooms than the best bellhop in a Hilton!!

Our official opening was Wednesday, June 24 at 6:30 PM. There were some surprised people when Dale Taylor asked us all to stand for the Honorable Helen Hunley, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta; with more surprised people when we had to ask them to step back in the food line-up and allow

Ms. Hunley and her escort to go first!! (Apparently not everyone has a Queen's representative!)

Following a delicious meal greetings were brought to us by the Honorable Helen Hunley and a Council woman representing the City of Edmonton.

During the free time we made our way to Dinwoody Lounge, (DL), which we turned into a center for worship.

Our Lovefeast service was led by the women of the Pacific Southwest with the Rev Kay Ward bringing the message. Do you remember what took place during that Lovefeast?

After the Lovefeast elements were served people didn't partake as we usually do in our North American churches. Women from around the world broke off pieces of their bun and fed them to others. This caught on and what a beautiful sight to see. This Feast of Love must flow from God to us and outward from us to others. How beautiful it must have been for God to see his children, brown, black, and white sharing

with each other. (If only we could do this in our own churches and around the world!)

Interlude: Grab your hymnal! (These are the hymns sung during the Lovefeast:)

What Brought Us Together;
 We in One Covenant are Joined;
 God Reveals His Presence;
 Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun;
 Thy Presence, Gracious God, Afford;
 Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice;

Be Present at our table, Lord
 Be here and everywhere adored;
 From Thine all-bounteous hand our food
 May we receive with gratitude. Amen

While we partook of the Lovefeast the Women of the Southwest Region sang special music:

Break Thou the Bread of Life;
 Jesus, Still Lead On;
 (and the Moravian Anthem!), Sing Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!

This was a beautiful way to start our Conference.

“The Ship”, in Lister Hall, was open every night at 9 PM for a social time with family and friends, and snacks were provided.

Interlude – this is a good time for you to get your Bible.

Thursday brought a full day starting with breakfast, and moving to Dinwoodie Lounge for informal singing. Each day, before our guest speaker, one of the four co-chairs Darlene, Susie, Ann or Betty, read the Daily Text for the day. Do you remember the lovely gifts? Susie Hishey and Zidey Kudan, from Rajur, India, presented -a wool wall hanging, made by the ladies of Rajpur, with the Alberta Rose in the center. On behalf of the European Churches we received a white tatted rose covered with glass and presented by Gundula Vorreyer of Germany. (Usually, any gifts from a Women's Conference go to someplace in Bethlehem. Since both of these gifts were given to the "Moravian Women's Conference in Alberta, Canada", our local planning group and all four co-chairs put our collective feet down and insisted they stay in Alberta. They presently hang in the Moravian Museum in the old Moravian church in Bruderheim.)

This was the first day we sang our Conference Hymn: "Bring Me to Full Bloom", words and music by Pearl Miller of Leesport, PA.

1 - As quiet dews refresh my soul where whisp'ring winds
caress the sod,
Here I place my life, my dreams, as I surrender to my God

CHORUS: SO, LET ME GROW WHERE I AM
PLANTED, THERE BRING ME TO
FULL BLOOM.

2 - For God created flowers fair, a sign of his
unending love,

So He'll nourish us to grow, Like Heavenly Gardens up
above.

CHORUS:

3 – And when the Master Gardener gleans His fragrant roses,
blossoms rare,
May He find each one of us still blooming radiantly there.

CHORUS: SO LET ME GROW WHERE I AM PLANTED,
THERE BRING ME TO FULL BLOOM."

(In all there were five submissions including those from:
Margaret Fibke, Bruderheim; Mary Hege, Winston-Salem;
Heather Armstrong, Toronto; and Lynn Williams Hall, N.C.)

Dr. Squire's first message was titled: "Bring Me to Full
Bloom". I quote: "If we, as Christian women, are to come to
full bloom we must:

1. have seeds of faith and good soil in which to grow,
2. be nourished and fed and pruned and weeded,
3. bear not only blossoms but fruit.

"All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of
today"

"Is it the size of the seed? One of the smallest seeds is the
seed of the orchid, a seed that develops with a most beautiful
and valued flower. One of the biggest seeds is the

coconut, and it is as highly valued but for different reasons. Neither the size of the seed or length of time the seed needs to sprout, but the soil in which that seed is planted is what is most important.”

Are we planted in clay? “It’s plastic when wet and easily molded but becomes hard and brittle when dry...Have (we) become so hard and brittle that no seed can penetrate (our) soil? Does (our) faith dry out quickly because nothing fresh and new can get through?”

“Silt, is a soil formed of mineral particulars larger than sand but smaller than clay. It is sedimentary, found as a product of the weathering and decomposition of rock. ...it is easily washed away from its...origin and deposited in another place. Is your faith easily washed away by troubles or doubts? Are you too easily moved by what others say and think?”

Read Job 14:18-19

“Sand is also formed by the weathering and decomposition of rock...For planting, sand is too dry, too lacking in nourishment, too loose to be effective. Do you latch onto new ideas quickly but have no staying power to see a project through? Do you lack the nourishment needed to be firm in faith and commitment?”

“Loam,... a mixture of clay, silt, sand, and organic matter. It has the best Properties of all its ingredients...more fertile than sand, and less stiff than clay. It’s porosity allows high moisture retention and air circulation, making it an ideal planting medium. Are your roots deep in the very best that others have contributed?

others have contributed? Do you have a fertile mind that hangs on to whatever it needs for growth? Do you let the fresh air of new ideas nourish the things you have inherited?" "A one-sided faith is like a one-ingredient soil. Our faith is nourished best when it is grounded in scripture, enriched by tradition, nourished by experience and cultivated by an enquiring intellect."

Read Galatians 6:7-10 and Luke 8: 4-15.

"How can we be sure that our seeds and our roots will feed a future generation? The answer is found in Ephesians 3:17."

Following each message by Anne, we had free time and then met for our discussion groups. I was able to attend three different groups and was impressed not only by the leadership of each group but the discussion that was taking place.

Leaders were: Mavis Stephenson, Phyllis Ronald, Faith Fliegel, Grace Day, Eurilee Haynes, Vi Hoffman, Doris Norcross, Faith Flinchum, Pam Yockey, Ann Stafford, Clarene Ainsworth, Nancy Krail, Rosemary Kirkman, Joann Self, Inez Crews, Ann Fotlz, Marjorie Laufenberger, Madeline Albee, Carolyn Jendro, and Joyce Gerdman.

Can you imagine over 500 women from around the world, led by leaders from throughout our worldwide church, with the different thoughts, opinions, and insights we shared with each other? What a blessing!

In 1987 West Edmonton Mall was the place to go – if not to shop then just for the atmosphere and all the ‘strange’ parts of the Mall. So, after lunch the busses pulled up outside Lister Hall for boarding. Remember Julia from Indianapolis, who had spent time in Hotel/University Hospital? Well, she got out in time to go shopping and participate in the rest of the Conference! One happy and blessed person!!

Following dinner we had a good, old-fashioned Singstunde with Bev and Wilma.

After some free time we gathered at 7:30 for our first session of “Around the World”. Throughout Lister Hall we would go to the country we had previously chosen:

British Province – Audrey Littlewood;
 South Africa East & West (*see below);
 Southern Tanzania – Tulibumi Mwiseje;
 Guyana, S. America – Ruth Brandford;
 Surinam, - Salome Parabirsing and Anita Berggraaf; or
 East Germany – Gundula Vorreyer. (Marg Adam and Gundula still keep in touch.)

Interlude: At this point I’d like to remind you that although we went till 9 PM it wasn’t dark outside – just another ‘Canadian phenomenon’!! The women were offered black garbage bags to cover their windows to help keep out the light!

*My first choice was South Africa East & West. You must remember that in 1987 Apartheid was still the way of life in South Africa.

Christabel Weber of Westfleur, Atlantis, Rep. of S. Africa, who was a teacher of 'Colored' children, was first to speak. Her first words were 'Please do not ask us questions of a political nature.' (not because she didn't trust her sisters at the Conference, but they never knew whenever they talked if someone from the government was listening and they would be reported. Can you imagine that their fear even carried to Canada!?) Her following words hit me just as hard. (I had been sitting next to Christabel with Benigna on her other side.) "In my country I could not sit beside my Sister Betty because she is white, and Sister Benigna because she is black, and I am called 'colored'. Benigna and I would be arrested."

I could hear the intake of breathe from some of our Sisters, and the tears came to my eyes, as they do now as I write this. Now, I knew someone who suffered a prejudice I had never known. Now, I learned of a harsh reality I found hard to comprehend.

Between my Colored SISTER Christobel, and my Black SISTER Benigna I learned about the education – or lack thereof – in S. Africa. Black children got pencils and paper, if they were lucky. Colored children had books, and White children had computers.

Benigna Zibi was from Vosloorus, Transvaal, East S. Africa and ran a nursery, for 'Black' children. One day as Benigna was walking from Lister Hall to the Student Union with Tulibumi (Tuli) Mwiseje from Tukuyu, Tanzania, Benigna began to cry and Tuli asked her if she was sick. No. Her tears were because white people stopped their cars

to allow her to cross the street! That never would have happened in her homeland.

Benigna had asked to stay with a family following the Conference. It was difficult for Benigna to realize that she could stay with a WHITE family in another town, (Bruderheim), than Edmonton without getting a paper from the police to allow that! (But, you and I go wherever we want!)

Benigna has gone home to her Lord and doesn't need to worry about discrimination anymore. Praise God! I will never forget Benigna and Christabel and what they taught me. If I claim to care about God's people wherever they are, and they are suffering, I suffer too. That's a heavy burden. (Now, I must help care for those suffering around me. Thank GOD He is helping me.)

I'm sure, as you read this, you are recalling things you learned as you traveled to three parts of the world and experienced a different culture and way of life.

Friday morning we heard from Anne Squire on "Growth and Gardeners". "Growth is the 'Middle Time' and we as women are in our 'middle time' – the time between the years when the seeds of faith were first planted in us, and the time when we come to full bloom and bear fruit."

"...what is God's responsibility during our growing time, and what is ours?"(Read Genesis 1:9-12, 26-31)

"The sad history of the world, is however, that the human 'protectors' have interpreted 'having dominion' as 'having power'...looking at the earth today, can [God] still say that

it is good?" In her poem "The Middle-Time", Lona Fowler writes:

"Between the exhilaration of Beginning...
 And the satisfaction of Concluding
 Is the Middle-Time
 Of Enduring, Changing, Trying, Despairing, Continuing,
 Becoming.
 Jesus Christ was the Man of God's Middle-Time
 Between Creation and...Accomplishment.
 Through Him God said of Creation 'Without Mistake'.
 And of Accomplishment, 'Without doubt'.
 And in our Middle Times Of Wondering and Waiting,
 Hurrying and Hesitating, Regretting and Revising –
 We who have begun many things... and seen but few
 completed –
 We who are becoming more...and less – Through the
 evidence of God's Middle-Time
 Have a stabilizing hint That we are not mistakes,
 That we are irreplaceable, That our Being is of interest,
 And our Doing is of purpose, That our Being and our Doing
 Are surrounded by AMEN!

"What has never been rightly understood is that, from the beginning of creation, humans have been in a covenant relationship with God. What has been completely overlooked was that God long ago had made a fundamental, initial and sustaining covenant with all of creation....Because we have missed seeing all that, we have not seen 'honoring creation' as our side of the covenant."

Check out Isaiah 24: 1-6; other Scripture used by Anne include: Joel 1:4; Joel 2: 28-29; Matthew 6: 28a-33;

John 15: 1-8; 2Kings 19: 29-31 (this is good even for camping!); John 4: 31-38.

Thinning - "...remove from our daily schedules all those things which prevent us from developing to full bloom." Do we truly live the gospel or are our words the only witness?" In the church, "Do we work together on finding answers to problems that are affecting our community or do we allow church concerns to usurp all our time and energy?"

Transplanting - "Our lives are enriched by the interplay of our lives with lives around us - especially the complex world 'out there'. No one can grow by allowing others to make their decisions. Corporately, we also must make the shift from being a closed church, existing for our own sake, to being a church which lives in and for the world."

Pruning - "If we could only remove the greed we feel, the intolerance we show, the bad temper we inflict on others, the jealousy we harbour, how much more beautiful our lives would be."

Feeding or Fertilizing - "Our own lives are enriched by a good addition, at times, of what seems to be the 'garbage' of life or the 'refuse' of society. It is only in that way that we see that what we consider useless is, in God's eyes, a necessity of life. The handicapped, mentally retarded, forgotten ones of society are what God uses to enrich our lives to teach us the value of every living person. The church, too, needs to move into the areas of life where those considered 'rotten' by society are shown to be the very ones who can help our churches come to full bloom.

...prisons, ...half-way houses,...soup kitchens ...refugee camps...challenge the churches to remember that the same Jesus who moved among the outcasts,...lepers...neglected, still lives among the poor and the refugee.” Read John 4:14

Weeding – “To weed a garden is to remove unwanted plants, which have grown up uninvited, for which you did not plant the seeds. To weed our own lives requires concentration...to distinguish between the growth we appreciate and affirm, and that which we know will distract and detract. For some the weed is too much TV; overeating; drinking; ...answering ‘yes’ to every need that confronts us...” “Someone has said that our character and our gardens both reflect the amount of weeding done in the growing season. How true... subtle evils which distract us from fulfilling our mission as (the) church - the biblical and theological study which becomes an end in (it)self rather than an impetus to mission;...intolerance we show toward others who dare to think differently from ourselves;...weeds are often disguised as flowers and lure us into believing they are useful.”

Session Two of our ‘World Tour’ was Friday afternoon and included presentations from:

Czechoslovakia – Natasha Bauer;

Denmark – Rita Mikkelsen;

Alaska and Labrador – Una Saunders;

India – Susie Hishey and Zhidey Kundan; and

Central America – Lucia Newball Green of Nicaragua.

‘Playing Politics’, whether in the church or government, is appalling. Two ladies from Costa Rica, Doris Hodgson and Herta Masanto, and Esmilda Narr of Nicaragua, were not

allowed to come to the Conference because of red tape between the US and those two countries. They were not allowed to fly over US airspace!! (My recollection is that Lucia was already in the US, Southern Province, and was asked to come in place of the other women.) Our Sister from Czechoslovakia was not allowed to leave her country. So, Natasha, who had fled Czechoslovakia a year earlier, and now lived in Edmonton, took her place. (Do you remember in the late '80's when Gorbachev was talking about 'Glasnost', and 'Perestroika', with Czechoslovakia? Neither Natasha, nor her family in Czechoslovakia, knew anything about them. Just words bandied about by the Soviet Union.) Though not a Moravian, Natasha gave us a good understanding of what life was like for our Moravian Sisters.

Following this second trip around the world there was a long break allowing people to take advantage of sightseeing tours, followed by dinner, Singstunde, free time – and then....

We took our last trip around the world.

Jamaica – Linette Burnett;

West Indies – Lola Richards;

with a repeat of the British Province, Czechoslovakia, and South Africa East and West.

Saturday morning started us off with another good breakfast, then informal singing – (do other denominations sing as much as Moravians?), and our last spiritual feeding by Dr. Ann Squires.

Flowers and Fruit: “As beautiful as the rose is it does have a prickly side. Allan Boesak’s book of sermons...is a

testament to what it means to walk the thorny road of apartheid. The refugees who crowd the camps are walking the thorny road of displacement and homelessness. The poor who people our cities live on the thorny road of poverty and unemployment. The people who struggle for freedom in Nicaragua are marching on the thorny road of oppression. Other Third World people walk the thorny road of exploitation by the richer nations.” (check out Luke 6:43-45; Luke 13:18-19)

“A mustard plant is expected to produce mustard, not branches for nests!” But, God is full of surprises, and coming to full bloom may surprise even ourselves.

“The Bible is full of stories of women who came to full bloom in surprising ways. Puah and Shiphrah surprised Pharaoh, Exodus 1: 15-20. Sometimes we too come to Full Bloom when we protest laws that are unjust or situations which are unfair.”

Read about Moses and the five daughters of Zelophehad. Numbers 27: 1-8. “These five women came to Full Bloom when they insisted that women too do have rights.”

How about Rahab, the Harlot, in Joshua 2: 1-16. “Today many women will come to Full Bloom whether or not we judge them worthy.”

Read the story of Ruth, but particularly verses 15-17. “Ruth came to Full Bloom when she made a difficult choice – and today we too are faced with choices that will lead to full bloom or faded flowers.”

“Abigail was a woman who came to Full Bloom when her churlish husband refused hospitality to David and his army, and almost precipitated a war. We pick up the story as the point messengers tell Abigail what has happened: Samuel 25: 14-24, 32-35. She came to Full Bloom by acting with courage when her husband lacked it – and we too must often make independent decisions if we are to come to Full Bloom.”

The (unnamed) Canaanite Woman “came to Full Bloom during a conversation with Jesus, and in doing so helped change the course of His ministry. It was a woman – a pushy, upstart of a woman – who dared to argue with Jesus and force him to change his mind! Not only was she a woman – but a foreigner as well. It is interesting that this is the only recorded incident where Jesus reversed a decision.

“...all these women came to Full Bloom and bore fruit. Flowers are beautiful to see but they do fade and die, and unless they produce seed or fruit they are forgotten...Jesus said ‘Each tree is known by its own fruit’. By what fruit are you known? Do you seek only your own good – or the good of all? Do you work for justice for all people everywhere? Do you seek peace for all nations – food for all people, a safe refuge for all who need a home? If you wish to come to Full Bloom and bear fruit you must return to the source, for only by abiding in Christ Jesus can we bear fruit. ...listen again to the words of Christ: John 15: 1-12.

It’s already lunchtime on Sat. June 27, and then the tours of the churches. The Conferees found out about Bruderheim, Edmonton, Heimtal, MillWoods, and Rio Terrace.

NO one could know how significant this would prove to be.* If Heimtal is typical of the other churches then our visitors and local church people had a great time fellowshiping together. (Eleanor Wudel found it special to ride out to Heimtal on the bus with the ladies who had chosen her Church.)

Back to Lister Hall for our last supper together, Singstunde and getting ready during the free time to enjoy an evening of entertainment. Remember those comments back in '84 about us not being Bethlehem or Winston-Salem? The ladies wanted something different, and we gave it to them all week. Then, the last night, we blew them away with the ethnic entertainment. With Edmonton being a larger city than either Bethlehem or Winston-Salem, we also have a greater ethnic diversity. The program started with:

St. Croix Folk Dancers, Leona Woodson – Coordinator
(Virgin Islands!)

Father Jan Community School French Children's
Choir – 8-9 years old, Dir./pianist – Miss Lise Jean
Louis

Slaney Valley School of Irish Dancing, Teacher – Lori
Smith

Deutscher Dameanenchor (Wild Rose German Ladies'
Choir, Dir. - Donald Inglis, Pianist – Lesia Kohut

Domagoj Croatian Folk Ensemble Dance Group of
Edmonton, Instructor: Boris Zvonkovic

Edmonton Chinese Baptist Choir – Conductors:
Shirley C. Shum and Mr. Chan, Pianists – Lisa Sue and
Christina Fung

Alberta Zerka Ukrainian Dancers – Instructor, Chris
Koper

and, a surprise performance by Susie Hishey and Zhidey Kundan of Tibetan Folk dances!

At the end of the entertainment Meta Ceretzke, who had organized the evening's event, called me to the front. Darlene presented me with a gold, butterfly necklace, on behalf of the Planning Committee! What a surprise! I still have that necklace. (Now I knew what our local committee and co-chairs were all whispering about when I went to a room where they were all gathered and Darlene had to tell a 'fib' about their gathering!)

This wonderful entertainment was followed by an Ice-Cream Social where we concocted our own brand of sundaes!! (Do you remember the University students who crashed our party? They had heard the music and were drawn to our event!)

Where has the time gone? It's already Sunday morning, June 28. Following breakfast we gathered in Dinwoodie Lounge one last time for our Communion Service. The Southern Province had gladly taken on responsibility for this time of Worship. The Ushers for the Service, far removed from the Southern Province, were from Labrador! Sisters Christine Baikie and Christine Denniston of Nain; Mary Anderson, and Ruth Flowers, of Makkovik; Katie Rendell and Una Saunders of Happy Valley. (It is my hope that you will find time to pray through this service and remember where you were and how you felt as part of this large congregation of women. Could you share it with your study group or in a church service?)

The choir sang "Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice".

(Let your mind take you back to this wonderful time as we antiphonally prayed the Litany of

THANKSGIVING AND ADORATION:

WE give thanks, O God, that you are fruitful, that you use your power to create.

You have set the earth firmly on its foundation with the sun and moon to rule over the day and night.

YOU placed the ocean over the earth like a robe, and then set boundaries for the waters.

You commanded the earth to produce all kinds of plants, plants that bear fruits and grains.

YOU called forth creatures to fill the sea, and, birds to split the air with their wing.

You spoke, and from the earth came animal life: Domestic and wild, large and small.

YOU made human beings in your own image, male and female; you blessed them and invited them to enjoy creation.

You instilled creative power in all you made, for you called creation to be fruitful and to multiply.

WE give thanks, O God, that you are filled with love for creation; that you tend the earth with care.

From the sky you send rain on the hills and the earth is filled with your blessings.

YOU make grass grow for the cattle, and plants for humanity to use;

So that we can grow crops, and produce wine to make us happy, olive oil to make us cheerful,

And, bread to give us strength.

ALL your creatures depend on you to give them food when they need it.

You give it to them, and they eat it; your hands provide food, and they are satisfied.

WE give you thanks, O God, that in tending the earth with care, your love has borne many other kinds of fruit.

You give the law, which teaches us to respect you and all life.

YOU sent Jesus, the Christ, who shows us your willingness to join in our human joy and suffering.

You send the Holy Spirit who comforts us like a mother comforts her children.

THROUGH the sacraments and scripture, you sustain the church, which preserves and teaches us the faith.

For these and for all your many blessings, we give you thanks, O Lord.

The Choir sang: "The Shepherd Psalm"

Read Mark 4:1-9

"An Affirmation of Faith"

O GOD, like a farmer sowing seeds in the most unlikely places, you extravagantly sow your love.

You do not sow only where the soil is rich and deep, or where the harvest is sure and safe.

YOU sow where it does not make sense to sow.

You sow seeds even in the hardest, most selfish hearts.

You sow seeds where pride and jealousy struggle to take hold.

You sow seeds where oppression would rob humanity of all hope.

YOU sow seeds where complacency and apathy would choke out any response to your love.

You sow seeds even in our own hearts and, by your grace, some bear fruit thirty, sixty, yes, even a hundred times.

“Prayers of Confession”

WE confess, O God, our discomfort with your extravagant sowing.

We feel cheated and diminished when others receive.

WE do not rejoice in their happiness, comfort and success

Forgive us, O Lord.

WE confess our difficulty believing you provide more than enough for everyone.

We tightly hold on to all that is ours.

WE do not share our money, power, or possessions.

Forgive us, O Lord.

WE confess our fear of your abundance.

When others receive, we fear losing our power.

WHEN we receive, we fear freedom from our self-imposed limitations.

Forgive us, O Lord.

WE confess our caution, for while you sow recklessly on all types of soil, we sow only in the surest places.

We hold ourselves in reserve.

WE do not bear the fruit you call us to bear.

Forgive us, O Lord.

HEAR now God’s word of pardon: “I do not condemn you. Go, but sin no more.”

“Prayers of Petition”

DRAWING strength from divine forgiveness and love, let us bring our prayers to God.

For the world, for the just distribution of the earth’s abundance, for the sick, poor, and lonely,

For their physical, spiritual and emotional healing;

We Pray, O Lord

FOR your church, for a cooperative spirit among all who believe in you, for their unselfish service to those in need, For their faithful proclamation of your coming kingdom,

We pray, O Lord.

FOR ourselves, for trust in your provident care, for courage to share in your creative work, for strength to bear the fruit you would have us bear,

We pray, O Lord.

FOR your kingdom, for the end violence and oppression, for peace and justice, for the completeness your Rule brings,

We pray, O Lord.

Hymn 528, "Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord"

(Yes, you should sing it! Need a hymnal? Borrow one from your Church.)

The offering was received, and, as previously decided by our committee and all four co-chairs, the money was to be split between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres of our Moravian Church.

Scripture: John 15: 1-8

Message: The Rev. Lynnette Delbridge

We gave the Right Hand of Fellowship as we sang "Come Then, Come, O Flock of Jesus", and "Forth in Thy Name, O Lord, I Go"

BUT, as many of our 'guests' had taught us, we didn't stay in one place. We **MOVED** around the room. It was **GREAT!**

Do you remember turning around and kneeling facing our chairs, after the bread and wine?

Susie Hauser and Ann Herrick – our Southern Co-Chairs – took part in the service. The Rev. Lynnette Delbridge: Service Preparatory to the Holy Communion. Louise Kapp: Communion Hymns, Mrs. Mitzi Kimball: organist, Mrs. Johnnie Hauser: music director

Do you remember the sea of white in front of us? Seven female pastors assisted with the Holy Communion service:

Rev. Cicely Athill – Tobago, West Indies

Rev. Wendy Beck – Bruderheim

Rev. Barbara Berg – Wisconsin Rapids, WI

Rev. Blair Couch – Edmonton

Rev. Marjorie Grubb – Ockbrook, Derby, England

Rev. Betsy Miller – Lake Mills, WI

Rev. Kay Ward – Yorba Linda, CA

Then, some free time when we could visit a little longer with the friends we had made.

Following the noon lunch it was time to say ‘good-bye’. Our huge Friendship Circle of over 500 women filled the Lister Hall dining room. We put our right arm over our left and linked hands with those on either side of us. As I remember, this was a spontaneous time of sharing, and praying. We sang one verse of “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”. Then, still holding hands, we turned so that we were facing outward – signifying that we must go out from where we are, with God’s love in our hearts, minds, and actions. Three years of planning and it’s all over! Not really.

I will never forget this Conference, the wonderful women of our District who were on our committee, and chairing with Darlene Nehring. There was only one negative voice about us hosting the Women's Conference. However, when everyone else was on-board, she became part of our planning committee.

As our Conference ended the Moravian Music Festival began that Sunday night. I attended that service and one class on Monday morning, during which I fell asleep. I went to Bob's room and slept. Then, exhausted, went home to recover from one of the most WONDERFUL experiences of my life. I didn't even have the energy to sing in the choir. But, I sure enjoyed all the concerts.

We had guests from Wisconsin parked in a camper in our driveway, and women from the Caribbean in our home.

When it came time to drive some ladies from the Islands to the airport, we had to stop at Lister Hall for one of our passengers. My five-passenger was packed. We took off with plenty of time to make the plane. We were nearly at the airport when someone realized she had left a bag at LH. I turned around on the back road and took off a little faster than the officer in the approaching squad car thought I should. (It was just the day before that the price for speeding tickets had doubled from \$60 to \$120!!) The officer dutifully turned his car around and I dutifully pulled over to the side of the road. After he checked my documentation I explained that I had to get back to LH and then back to the airport in half an hour's time. No ticket, whew, just a warning to drive carefully. After we took off

we had a good laugh as one of the ladies in the back seat said "he probably hasn't seen so many black people at one time with a white driver"!! I got Cicely and the other ladies back in time for their flight!

Before the Conference, at a Women's Fellowship Rally, Mary Lange and I did a skit as though we were meeting on the street. We 'chatted' for a while about the up-coming Conference. I mentioned that when I go somewhere special I usually buy a new nightgown. Mary said she had to hurry home because Arthur was waiting for her.

One night, when Darlene and I returned to our room, there was a package on my bed. I opened it and there was a new nightgown for me. Darlene said she didn't know whom it was from or how it got into our room. "Darlene, have you asked forgiveness for that 'fib'?" It was years before I found out it was from Doris Prochnau!

As I end this report I marvel again at what we accomplished. At that time our Canadian District had fewer members than Central Moravian Church in Bethlehem! Yet, what is impossible with man is made possible with GOD!! At the risk of repeating myself: It was a PRIVILEGE for me to work with Darlene and our Local Planning Committee as we asked God to work through us in our planning, and carrying out of the plans for the Fifth Interprovincial Moravian Women's Conference.

Our local committee went out for supper once the Conference and Music Festival were over. We had a wonderful time, sharing stories of our time in the planning process, but mostly of our experiences during the Conference – some funny, some spiritual, but all a blessing.

THANK YOU: to everyone who had a part in this first Women's Conference to be held outside of the USA. May God bless you as you relive these moments of the Conference.

Oh, yes, GOD, thank you for being with us from beginning to end☺

In Joy, Thankfulness, and Love,
Betty

*On July 30th a tornado tore through MillWoods and other areas. The news had gone worldwide. Some of us received phone calls from Europe, the Caribbean, and other parts of our Moravian world. The people wanted to know about the damage, were any of our people injured or killed, or churches destroyed? People thousands of miles away, praying for us, because they had been to our churches. That's what God's people do.

(If you have any materials from the Conference that you think would be good to have in the Archives please contact me. 780-436-8190 – Ph/Fax; bettyv@shaw.ca. I'm particularly interested in the large pink booklet – 8.5 x 11. We already have the green Lovefeast, and pink Communion Booklets. Thanks. Betty)

Bruderfeld Moravian Church Ladies Group

"In March 1942 in the home of Mrs. Julius Dreger, the women of the Bruderfeld Church gathered to organize a ladies group called Frauen Ferien. There were 28 charter members in this group. They would gather together once a month in a member's home. Up until December 1953 they spoke the German language. They then changed to English and became known as the Ladies Aid.

In 1960 the women were organized into the group known as the Women's Fellowship. It operates on a local, regional and provincial basis. The purpose of the Women's Fellowship in the local church is to unite all women in Christian fellowship and to make Christ known throughout the world. The women involved are of various ages, occupations, talents and interests.

Even though the name has changed they still serve the same purpose in Christian fellowship serving God and the community."

(Quoted from the South Edmonton Saga)