



Provincial Update: November 2023

The Northern Province

Moravian Church in America

“Look Up...”

I confess....I cringed when I walked through the door. It was mid-October this year when I entered a big box hardware store in our area....and there they were -- Christmas trees of every size and color, as well as blow up decorations beyond the imagination and rows of blinking, dancing, and color-changing light strands. Despite my own sense of immediate repulsion, I'm pretty sure I was in the minority on this one. A young family was meandering through this forest of lit Christmas trees and they stopped at one of the tallest trees and looked up.....and took a moment to gaze upon the beautiful star on its very top. That's when I heard the words from a tiny young girl say, “Mom...I just can't wait....I can't wait until Christmas finally gets here again!”

“I just can't wait!” I was torn. There was a part of me that said, “It's not yet time to wait....it's only October!” Yet something stirred me about this young one's words. “I just can't wait!” She had already begun to watch....to prepare....to anticipate....to look forward to that sacred day. It would be easy to be skeptical and surmise that what she was anticipating had more to do more with sweets and gifts and shining decorations. Regardless, she had begun the “wait.” Maybe it was a few weeks early...or maybe not early at all. Advent had begun in her heart and there was a part of me that ended up feeling a little jealous.

We live currently in a day when it is no small act of labor to be hopeful. The horrific events happening daily in the middle east, the reoccurring tragedies of gun violence and mass shootings, the natural tragedies from earthquake, fire, and flood can tax one's ability to continue to search for hope, peace, love, and joy. Yet this sacred season of Advent is now upon us. We are those whose faith calls us to look above the seemingly impenetrable hopelessness, the warring times, the hate which divides, and the despair which consumes....and proclaim some quite simple words of faith. “I can't wait!....I won't wait!....for Emmanuel, truly knows no season!”

Consider these words from one who knew the struggles of Advent....

“Look up, you whose gaze is fixed on this earth, who are spellbound by the little events and changes on the face of the earth. Look up to these words, you who have turned away from heaven disappointed. Look up, you whose eyes are heavy with tears and who are heavy and who are crying over the fact that the earth has gracelessly torn us away. Look up, you who, burdened with guilt, cannot lift your eyes. Look up, your redemption is drawing near. Something different from what you see daily will happen. Just be aware, be watchful, wait just another short moment. Wait and something quite new will break over you: God will come.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, God Is In the Manger

“I can't wait....Look up!” May such a small practice and discipline of Advent guide us...maybe even inspire us...upon our own Advent journey.

– Rev. Dave Bennett

2024 District Synods

Each district will be holding a synod in 2024. Save the dates!

- Western District Synod: April 25-28 at Mt. Morris Camp & Retreat Center
- Canadian District Synod: June 7-9 at Millwoods Church
- Eastern District Synod: June 26-29 at Moravian University



Racial Justice Team Advent 2023 Study Series

The Northern Province Racial Justice Team is offering an Advent Series toward Racial Justice and Healing. Hour-long sessions will be held on Wednesdays throughout Advent at 7:30pm ET.

- **November 29th:** Love through Curiosity
- **December 6th:** Love through Forgiveness
- **December 13th:** Love through Partnership
- **December 20th:** Love through Activism

Theme: I Give You A New Commandment... Love One Another (John 13:34)

Each session will feature scripture, theological reflection, guest speakers or video presentations, and time for conversation in small groups.

The first speaker will be Pardeep Singh Kaleka. Pardeep is a hate and violence prevention senior advisor of Not In Our Town; he is a de-radicalization and trauma specialist with Parents4Peace, a lecturer on Peace Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Pardeep's work has spanned law enforcement, education, social service, and counseling hate crime survivors and perpetrators. He specializes in understanding the impacts of communal trauma-developing practices to help build safer and more inclusive communities. In 2012, following the murder of his father in the hate killings at the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, he co-founded Serve2Unite, an organization nationally recognized for bridging school and community groups. He is the author of "The Gifts of Our Wounds" and an award-winning columnist with the Milwaukee Independent.

You do not need to pre-register for these gatherings. Join using the Zoom link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85945814606?pwd=RENwdDVVblJmY1dYRHooN1BKSSSt2Zz09>
Meeting ID: 859 4581 4606 Passcode: 832033

Questions? Contact Sue Koenig, Director of Racial Justice and Healing, suekoenig@mcnp.org

PEC Formally Recognizes Indigenous Peoples' Day

We are pleased to announce that the PEC is formally recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day as a paid holiday and the provincial office will be closed. In 2024, Indigenous Peoples' Day falls on Monday, October 24th. It is the hope of the Provincial Elders' Conference that congregations might also consider offering ministry staff this same opportunity to utilize this day for reflection and prayer for Indigenous People and their historical journey. We will work with the Racial Justice Team to provide a resource in the future for those seeking to dedicate this day to such reflection and prayer.

MCNP Racial Justice Team Announces Pilgrimage Grants

The 2023 Synod of the MCNP encouraged pilgrimages toward racial justice and healing in light of the profound impact of the Provincial Pilgrimage toward Racial Justice and Healing to Montgomery, Alabama for clergy, appointed pastors, and candidates for ordination held in September 2022. The Racial Justice Team is offering Pilgrimage Grants of \$500 to \$1,000 to encourage MCNP congregations to plan and experience pilgrimages toward racial justice and healing in 2024. (Those clergy, appointed pastors, and candidates for ordination who were eligible but unable to attend the September 2022 Pilgrimage may also apply for a grant up to \$500 to participate in a pilgrimage sponsored by another entity.)

Any site(s) or location of significance to/for the work of racial justice and the healing of relationships with Black, Indigenous, People of Color will be considered. Pilgrimage sites may be local, regional, or longer distances. Please see the grant application for additional details.

The deadline to apply for a 2024 Pilgrimage Grant from the MCNP Racial Justice Team is March 29, 2024. Grant applications will be reviewed by the Racial Justice Team by April 15, 2024. Please visit the MCNP Racial Justice Team website for an application:

<https://www.moravian.org/northern/category/racial-justice-and-healing/>

Common Ministries Resources

The Northern Province has produced several resources to help individuals and congregations learn about the work that is made possible through our Common Ministries commitment system. You will find a narrative budget, presentation slides, bulletin inserts, and a short video at

www.Moravian.org/Northern/Common-Ministries/



MMFA 2024 Moravian Day of Giving is February 13th

The fourth annual Moravian Day of Giving provides individuals the opportunity to support their local congregations, agencies, and the Northern Province with a special gift. In 2024, the Day of Giving will be held on Tuesday, February 13th. Stay tuned for more information from the Moravian Ministries Foundation as this date approaches.

Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller Accepts Invitation to Serve as Ecumenical Officer



The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller accepted the invitation of the Provincial Elders' Conference to serve as the Ecumenical Officer for the Northern Province. Betsy, who fills this volunteer role after the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Hermann Weinlick, represents the Moravian Church at ecumenical gatherings and nurtures ongoing and new full communion relationships to help fulfill Jesus' prayer 'that all may be one' (John 17).

Brother Tracy Robinson Serves as Chaplain at Morningstar Living

We would like to communicate that Brother Tracy Robinson received and accepted a Call to Specialized Ministry in service to Morningstar Living as their next Chaplain. Brother Robinson began that chaplaincy work on October 23rd.

Esperanza is continuing under the pastoral leadership of Sister Rhonda Robinson as she serves as their part-time pastor. Please hold both Sister Rhonda and Brother Tracy in your prayers as they settle into these new ministry roles, as well as the faith communities which they serve.



Debt Jubilee Project Relieves Over \$10 Million

The Debt Jubilee Project: For the Healing of the World, a collaborative effort of several of our Moravian agencies, was inspired by the recent debt relief projects undertaken in the Southern Province, and was affirmed by the 2023 Northern Province Synod. This project offered an opportunity for more Moravians to be involved in offering grace and hope through the forgiveness of medical debt.

The project launched on the last day of our provincial synod and concluded on August 13th. Surpassing the initial goal of \$50,000 in 50 days, the project raised \$102,424.47, which eliminated \$25,606.12 of debt at the Moravian Clinic in Ahuas, Honduras and \$10,965,390.60 in the United States for a grand total of \$10,990,996.72!

This project has impacted 13,485 families -- a number that eclipses the populations of Lake Mills, WI (6,433); Lititz, PA (9,527); Waconia, MN (13,071); the Southern Province (13,114); and the majority of the Northern Province (18,395). In the U.S., debt was relieved in 37 counties with a Moravian presence, across 15 states. Thank you for your generous support of this project. Find the latest information at www.moravian.org/debtjubilee/.

2023 Annual Reports

The 2023 Annual Report forms have been sent out to all congregations (pastors, administrative assistants, VC of Elders & Trustee Presidents, treasurers) by email on November 8, 2023. The form for 2023 has been revised with fewer questions and more links for online form filing.

Please kindly send your completed reports by regular mail to: Moravian Church Northern Province, 1021 Center Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018. You can also scan all the pieces of your report and send them by email to: johanna@mcnp.org.

Thank you for doing the important work of completing and returning the Annual Report. **It is important to return the report by February 29, 2024**, to avoid penalties. If you have any questions or difficulties with this, please call Johanna Heft at 610-865-3137, Ext. 202.

Board of World Mission Advent Calendar

The Board of World Mission is once again offering an Advent calendar that gives each of us the opportunity to count our blessings to be a blessing to others. Each day during Advent, we will learn more about the BWM's Blessings Flow Project and count the blessings that we often take for granted. This Advent calendar is part of the BWM's effort to provide clean water to five villages in La Moskitia, Honduras. Sign up for the Advent calendar and find preaching resources, children's activities, and more at www.MoravianMission.org/Advent.

