



# Living Branches

Moravians Growing  
in Faith, Love & Hope

## Faith-Singing Through Moravian History

*A 13-Week Study for Adults*

**The Moravian Church in America**  
*Northern & Southern Provinces*



## About this Curriculum

Whenever someone asks, “What do Moravians believe?”, the response to that question could be, “...read our Easter Dawn Liturgy and sing some hymns.”

Music has been central to the Moravian Church from the earliest times. The Rev. Dr. Albert H. Frank wrote in the *Companion to the Moravian Book of Worship*:

*“Since the earliest days of the Unitas Fratrum, worship in the language of the people has been of central importance to Moravians. A second guiding principle, that of congregational participation in worship, has worked with the former to make hymn singing an integral part of Moravian worship. Hymn singing to Moravians provides both a vehicle for, and evidence of, that fellowship with each other and with the Lord which is so dear. Hymns connect Moravians to their heritage, yet they place worshipers squarely in the present. They provide the clearest and most public expression of Moravian theology as well as the deepest heart-felt responses to God.”*

This curriculum is designed to help participants understand the theology expressed in hymn texts and the importance of hymn singing within the context of Moravian worship. For centuries Moravians have written and adapted hymns to express the theology we share. The first Protestant hymnal was printed in 1501 by the Ancient Unity, and the practice of hymn writing still exists as new hymns continue to be penned by Moravians of faith.

—The Rev. Dennis Rohn, author

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## Curriculum Notes

- ❖ Lessons are designed to help participants become familiar with the hymns and their theology within the context of the Moravian Church.
- ❖ Lessons are intended to be 60 minutes in length. Each lesson will include commentary, hymn texts and discussion questions.
- ❖ Participants should have a 1995 *Moravian Book of Worship* and a bible.
- ❖ Scripture passages are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV).
- ❖ Teacher/Leader should have copies of each lesson available for participants.
- ❖ Teacher/Leader should review each lesson ahead of time to determine if there are any special needs for the session.
- ❖ Teacher/Leader may find it helpful to review the following prior to leading Lesson 1.

## Using the Moravian Book of Worship

The following are located in the back of the 1995 *Moravian Book of Worship* and will aid participants in the study of our hymns.

1. **Index of Composers, Arrangers, Authors, Translators and Sources – page 884**  
An alphabetical listing of the source of hymns included in the *Moravian Book of Worship*.
2. **Biblical References and Allusions in Hymns – Page 892**  
This section identifies hymns that relate to specific scripture reference.
3. **Topical Index – Page 898**  
This sections identifies hymns according to specific topics such as; Adoration and Praise, Moravian Festivals, Church Year, etc.
4. **Metrical Index of Tunes – Page 927**  
This section identifies tune meter. This is particularly helpful when you want to fit a specific hymn text to a different tune. The meter of a hymn is determined by the number of syllables in a phrase. For example, if you count each line of hymn 816, Be Present at Our Table Lord, you will find there are eight syllables in each line. That is identified as meter “8.8.8.8.” If you look at that meter in this index (top right column page 929) you will see this hymn can be sung to 39 different tunes in our hymnal.
5. **Numerical Index of Tunes – Page 931**  
This is a listing of tunes by number and letter that corresponds with the numerical listing in the band book.
6. **Alphabetical Index of Tunes – Page 933**  
An alphabetical listing of tune names.
7. **Alphabetical Index of First Lines – Page 936**  
An alphabetical listing of the first line of each verse of each hymn. Note the first stanza lines are in bold.

There is also an online concordance to the *Moravian Book of Worship* at [www.mbwconcordance.org](http://www.mbwconcordance.org).



- ❖ *Each person will need a Book of Worship. Leader or volunteer read the following aloud to the class.*

In the Preface of the 1969 edition of the Hymnal of the Moravian Church there appears this statement:

*“The Moravian Church’s contribution began with the new emphasis on congregational singing through John Hus. The renewed Moravian Church added its emphasis on the Christian’s living relationship to his crucified and risen Lord, the joy of salvation and Christian fellowship. When we sing the great hymns of our heritage of Christian faith, we come near to fulfilling our Lord’s prayer for unity.”*

The Preface of our *Moravian Book of Worship*, published in 1995, begins with a quote from Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf on page iii: *“The hymnal is a kind of response to the Bible, an echo and an extension thereof. In the Bible one perceives how the Lord communicates with people; and in the hymnal, how people communicate with the Lord.”* This is our heritage. Hymn singing is central to who we are and a way for worshipers to declare their faith with one voice. A hymn is made up of two parts – text and music. Each can exist without the other but together they provide a combination which can touch our soul.

As we begin this study of Moravian hymns and theology as it is expressed through select hymns, it is only fitting we look at the central place music has played within our church. There is a saying, generally attributed to St. Augustine: *“The one who sings, prays twice.”* There are a couple of things we can take from this saying. First is the consideration of prayer itself. We may pray for ourselves or on behalf of another person or situation but the recipient of the prayer is God. So, if one prays twice with a hymn then the verses reflect the first prayer and the music reflects the second prayer.

Does this mean that those who, for whatever reason, do not sing only pray once? Not at all. Hymns are intended for community worship and therefore all participants within the community are surrounded by the music. It is important, however, that all pay attention to the words of the hymn or there is no prayer which the music will carry heavenward.

- ❖ *Find a favorite hymn in the Moravian Book of Worship (the index of first lines of each verse begins on page 936), and share with the group why that particular hymn is so important to you and your faith.*

More than likely you picked your favorite hymn because of the text. Often, because our hymns are translated from one language to another, it makes it difficult to be certain of the original meaning of the hymn. When a hymn, or any written piece for that matter, is translated, those translating give their interpretation of what is written



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as they endeavor to find the most appropriate words in the second language. There are times when the translator’s personal views determine which words are used. When the hymn verse is put into poetic meter, the words are altered as needed.

To illustrate, the following is the first verse of “Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice” directly from German to English by Dr. Paul Peucker, Northern Province Archivist.

Because I am Jesus’ little sheep  
I rejoice all the time  
about my good shepherd  
who knows how to feed me  
who loves me, who knows me  
and who calls me by my name.

Note this is nothing like what we sing in **Hymn 662** in the *Moravian Book of Worship* that follows.

Jesus makes my heart rejoice,  
I’m his sheep and know his voice;  
he’s my shepherd kind and gracious,  
and his pastures are delicious;  
constant love to me he shows,  
yea, my very name he knows.

A more accurate rendering of the hymn is **Hymn 723**:

I am Jesus’ little lamb;  
ever glad at heart I am;  
for my Shepherd gently guides me,  
knows my need and well provides me,  
loves me ev’ry day the same,  
even calls me by my name.

All three verses are based on Psalm 23, yet all three are different. That doesn’t make one right and two wrong, it simply makes them different. This hymn was written by Henriette von Hayn in 1789 as a children’s hymn (“I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb”), but we are most familiar with the Frederick William Foster translation, “Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice,” which has become an Moravian favorite.

• **Henriette von Hayn**

• Born in Nassau, became a  
• Moravian in Herrnhag.  
• From 1751-1766, she taught  
• at the Herrnhut Girls’ School.  
• Over 40 of her hymns (or  
• portions) appeared in the  
• Brüder Gesangbuch of 1778.



One must remember that language is not an exact science and moving a thought from one language to another is imperfect. The variations may be slight or drastic and they do impact the end result. This must be kept in mind as one considers Moravian hymnology, for most of it comes to us from the German and Czech languages and has been translated into English over the centuries.

From Jan Hus and John Amos Comenius to the hymn writers of today, all have had the inspiration of prayer and support of music. What is interesting about Moravian hymnody is the emphasis on four part harmony. Even the hymns of our Moravian forbearers Jan Hus, Luke of Prague, Mathew of Kunwald and Gabriel Komarovsky have come to us in four part settings. Singing in four parts represents community and diversity at the same time – a hallmark of the Moravian Church. Four part harmony represents the blending of different voices into one musical statement. The entire community of faith is joined as one in lifting up the prayers of the people in a setting where each voice complements the others. Unlike unison singing (where everyone sings the melody), four part harmony blends together different expressions of the same thought to add depth and color to the final prayer. Unison singing can imply that all are to be the same, where four-part harmony shows how differing expressions can enhance each other. Even if we aren't an alto, tenor or bass, within most Moravian Churches one will hear all four parts when hymns are sung. By following the words and hearing the harmonies we all participate in the prayer.

- ❖ *If possible have four members of your choir (a soprano, alto, tenor and bass), come to your class and sing the first verse of “Join We All with One Accord” (Hymn 525) singing the first half of the verse in unison and the second half in parts.*

Hymns have guided the Moravian Church through the centuries both in good times and bad. In the early years of the Unitas Fratrum, hymns became the statement of their theology. They have provided expressions of the faith to those who could not read the Bible, lifted spirits, eased pain, provided guidance, set direction for the people of God and demonstrated harmony through diversity of opinion.

The theme of unity was carried from the Ancient Unitas Fratrum into the Renewed Moravian Church partially through it's hymns. We find therein the foundation for the faith which has survived all types of persecutions and wars. **Hymn 525, “Join We All with One Accord”** is an example. The authorship of this hymn is unclear.





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With the 1969 Moravian Hymnal it was attributed to Matthew of Kunwald (1457) and/or Gabriel Komarovsky (1467). However, more recent research has changed this understanding. Here is what the Rev. Dr. Albert H. Frank had to say in his book Companion to the Moravian Book of Worship (page 122):

*This free expression of the thought of the Radujme of the Bohemian Brethren was made by an anonymous Moravian in 1904. It appeared in The Moravian on March 2, 1904 without attribution. Henry L. Williams suggested in conversation with the writer that he believed this to have been the work of the editor of the paper, S. H. Gapp (1873-1962) or of his younger brother J. Walter Gapp (1882-1972). Although the text has been altered, it preserves the name “brethren of his law” used of itself by the fifteenth-century Unitas Fratrum.*

TEXT: Matthew of Kunwald (1457) or Gabriel Komarovsky (1467) Tr. Michael Weisse (1531). Moravian tr. (1904)  
TUNE: Jan Roh (1544), alt. 7.7.7.7.D. Trochaic GAUDEAMUS PARITER

Join we all with one accord;  
praise we all our common Lord;  
for we all have heard his voice,  
all have made his will our choice.  
Join we with the saints of old,  
no more strangers in the fold,  
one the Shepherd who us sought,  
one the flock his blood has bought.

The call to unity—oneness in Christ—is the connection we have with all those who have gone before (“*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, ...*” Hebrews 12:1) We realize that we are not heading into the future alone. Our witness is based upon centuries of those who have gone before.

One our Master, one alone,  
none but Christ as Lord we own;  
“brethren of his law” are we –  
“As I loved you, so love ye.”  
Branches we in Christ, the Vine,  
living by his life divine;  
as the Father with the Son,  
so, in Christ, we all are one.

Here is the heart of the message of the hymn: the foundation upon which our faith in Christ is built is not the Law of Moses but the Law of Christ. One of the original names of the Unity of the Brethren was Brethren of Christ’s Law. (This is noted at the bottom of the hymn.) It is the Law of Christ as shared in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the



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Law of Christ as he shares with his disciples: *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.”* (John 13:34a) It is a law that although we have differences, it is Christ who unites us and the differences can be the textures that brighten our witness.

- ❖ *Take a few moments to reflect upon this verse. How do you understand the second line? If you are comfortable, please share with the group.*

The final verse points out the many ways we are united through Christ. Point by point they are listed to move us through prayer into our hope of heaven. As we move through our lives we remain united with Christ and with one another. One of the main points of the Unity of the Brethren was a re-ordering of faith, hope and love to faith, love and hope. This is to emphasize that **faith** is rooted in what Christ has done for us in his death and resurrection (past tense); **love** for God and for humankind is a reality right now (present tense); and **hope** looks to the future that is coming to us in Christ (future tense).

One the name in which we pray,  
one our Savior day by day;  
with one cup and with one bread  
thus one cov'nant way we tread.  
One in spirit, one in life,  
one amid earth's frequent strife,  
one in faith and one in love,  
one in hope of heav'n above.

And so it is that we move into the future united; not united in a way that we all look alike and believe alike, but united in our Lord and Savior. That is the center of our unity. The way in which we respond to Christ is the harmony of all four voice parts praising God. As stated at the end of the Lent 1 Liturgy on page 76: **“Christ, and him crucified, remain our confession of faith.”**

### Discussion Questions

1. How does your congregation experience the sense of oneness in Christ?
2. How do you see the unity expressed in the third verse?
3. How do you see this hymn speaking to your congregation in the midst of its journey in today's challenging world?