

Surely there are new activities like this in other congregations as well.

Regarding missions I strongly support the activities of the various synods to become active in our country as well as in others in ways that do not exclude, that establish us as a small but globally effective church promoting a more just north-south balance, and to practice whatever is in our power to do.

Mission activities in our province include not only the new work in the “Stopping Place” in Cottbus, but also the spiritual uprisings in Estonia and Latvia, and the sponsorship of independent schools in Gnadau and Herrnhut. The established schools in the Netherlands, Konigsfeld, and Tossens count to this as well as our kindergartens and other pastoral facilities.

I see no solution to the conflict in the Czech province in the near future. I have a hard time with it personally and am surely not alone in this. The next Unity Synod will need to address this; it may be helpful to take a look at our ancestors in the old Unity.

Finally I am looking forward to and am anxious to experience the seven congregational seminars planned as anniversary events this year, three of which will be held in May and four in the fall of the year. After these seminars perhaps there will be a new perspective on one or the other of these issues.

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## **The Jubilee: 550 Years Of The Moravian Church And 275 Years Of Moravian Mission**

**The Rev. Angetile Yesaya Musomba, Tanzania**

(Edited for style only by Jason Matlack)

This article is meant to articulate a Tanzanian perspective of the Church. This is not a formal statement, but is a personal view written from experience as a Church leader for about thirty years.

Today’s Moravian Church does not clearly show her stand on certain issues surrounding it. Its members pose many questions, and sometimes there is a great endeavor to find

answers, but there is no clear path to them. I would like to write about some of those very confusing issues.

For many years our church has remained locked in a room; it does not want to know what people are thinking about her stand on issues. There have been many conflicts in the world, but her members could hardly hear for what Moravians stood. Since Moravians are not

especially outspoken, many times the Moravian Church has closely identified herself with the ecumenical groups or communities. It seems the theology of the Church fellowship, regardless of the denominations, has stunted Moravian Church growth in many areas and in numbers. Moravians went out into the world many years ago, but we have remained few in many countries except in Africa. Moravians have, for many years, continued to serve those who were connected to a particular place or within Moravian history. The Moravian Church has always been able to look after its own sheep or to follow its sheep wherever they had strayed; she has not cared much to reach out these years.

Yet looking through the eyes of history, the Moravian Church has always traveled to places where it had been called to bring the Good News. But after reaching those destinations, the Moravian Church was very careful not to extend or expand its work where other churches were at work, even if the work of other churches was not promising. It seems that the hidden seed period and Count Zinzendorf's decision to allow Moravians to settle at Herrnhut has, for most of its history, shaped the Moravian Church to not reach past its own members into the surrounding culture. This same philosophy has kept the Moravian Church in Tanzania from growing.

This is not to say that the Moravian Church did not have good intentions to serve the poor. It has remained in very poor communities which have not been able to gather funds to sustain its own work, let alone to begin new works in the world. For many years the churches in poor

communities had to look for money from other wealthier churches. Since there was such limited numerical growth in the Moravian Church, the provinces claimed to not have enough money to aid the projects of poorer congregations. This has become a hindrance to the fulfillment of their Great Commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The "go forth" spirit, which was to extend to other lands and reach people where they were, died out. This is why the growth of the Moravian Church has remained very slow. The justification behind this slow growth was that it is "better to have few as a living church and be an example, than to have many members who are not living as good committed Christians." The spirit of "going forth" has been revived in some parts, especially in Africa and specifically in Tanzania. The rapid growth and expansion of Moravians in Tanzania has predominately occurred in the past thirty years due to certain leadership changes.

In 1970s, when Moravian missionaries crossed the provincial borders to work throughout Tanzania, our partner provinces asked, "Are there no Lutherans in such areas, or Anglicans?" In 1978, when the Southern Province decided to start the work in eastern Tanzania, our partner provinces found that work difficult to accept. A special conference was called in London in 1980 to discuss the issue, and the Southern Province decided to continue its work without the support of our partner provinces. To date Eastern Tanzania has become a Mission Area of Eastern Province and of Zanzibar. The area is even financially well

established. In 2005, it contributed 60% of the local income towards the general budget of the whole province.

The Moravian Church has also grown in other areas, and overall membership has increased. We have covered almost the whole of Tanzania. The Moravian Church in Tanzania has expanded to Zambia, Congo, and Malawi, and soon it will expand to Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya.

When you compare the Moravian Church in Tanzania with other provinces, especially in regard to practices and customs, it is very different. If you moved to Tanzania you could clearly note the differences, especially on days of special remembrance, the so called “Moravian Memorial Days.” When I study the history of our provinces, so many missionaries from other churches came to us, and they had no knowledge of these days. Because of this Tanzanians do not observe days like June 17<sup>th</sup>, when the buildings of Herrnhut were began by immigrants from Moravia in 1722; or July 6<sup>th</sup>, when John Hus was martyred at Constance in 1415; or August 13<sup>th</sup>, the manifestation of the Spirit in 1727; or August 21<sup>st</sup>, when Moravian mission began in 1732. In this way the Moravian Church in Tanzania is different from other provinces. But on the other hand, the Moravian Church in other parts of the world kept many different traditions while foregoing the “going forth” spirit and reaching out. The Moravian Church has remained for many years within her own denominational walls.

World changing events have not been able

to penetrate into the Moravian Church. We have been swallowed up by Moravian practices and customs. Certain times, practices, and customs have become essential to our faith, such as Advent Star, the Easter Morning Liturgy, the Love Feast, and “Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow Him.” All of the above mentioned have not been integral to the Moravian Church in Tanzania except the motto “Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow Him.” Our Tanzanian Provinces have lost what others call the Moravian Church. Tanzanians know of many Moravian practices and customs from their sister provinces. Yet sometimes we have to ask ourselves, what is the Moravian Church? Our first ministers were trained in seminaries which taught very little about the practices of the Moravian Church.

Our Church faces many difficulties in relating to what others call revival of the Church with the gifts from the Lord. The conflict in the Czech Republic, Honduras, and other parts of the world are not necessarily ecclesiastical splits. The Church has claimed for many years that it is a revived one, but I am not sure how this reality is lived out in practice. The wind is blowing very seriously with revival, shall our Church be able to stand in that wind? In Tanzania there are many revival or Charismatic groups within Moravian Church life. It is not clear how the church of the future will embrace and include all groupings. The historical claims that the Moravian Church is a renewed one seems to have been swallowed by practices and customs and the spiritual side has been left on the wayside.

I remember an instance at the All Tanzania Partners Consultations held in Zeist in 2002 when one of our ministers was asked to pray during the session. That Tanzanian minister prayed as a revival person would. Some partners wondered, “Is she mentally disturbed?” Such comments show the difference between the Moravian Church and the revival groups.

The Moravian Church in Tanzania has sometimes simply been the wagging tail of a dog. This can be seen in two examples from Unity Synods. At the Unity Synod of 1981 held in Herrnhut, a resolution was passed to prevent an increase in the numbers of the Unity Synod from Tanzania due to a fear that the number of Unity Provinces would increase. This action has greatly affected how the Tanzania Provinces look at issues concerning the International Moravian Church. During the 1995 Unity Synod held in Tanzania, a very important document called “Ground of the Unity” was put forth with very little input from the Tanzanian Provinces except to adopt the resolution. In that same Synod, due to a fear of the expansion of the provinces in Tanzania, a new document was passed called “The Steps of the Growth of the Moravian Church.”

The document “Ground of the Unity” is not known in Tanzania since it did not speak to the minds of the Tanzanian members. What is it that unites us as members of the Moravian Church world wide? This is a question to be worked on in future. How could the Moravians from other parts of the world participate in issues of the Unity? If the church is to remain as one, then it

needs to listen to those members who account for more than a half the total membership of the worldwide Moravian Church.

In recent years another dividing issue has just come out. The issue of homosexuality is going to divide the church into three parts: those who accept the practical life of homosexuals, those who look and watch what is going on, and those who openly reject it. At present, our Tanzanian provinces do not hear a ring of acceptance in our ears. We believe that it is impossible to agree with homosexual lifestyles and accept them in Church leadership as it is done in some churches of the Western world. We see homosexuals as sinners who affect the community at large. They are part of our society, but the Holy Bible clearly states that it is a sin. If such people do live in our society and participate in the church, then it is a secretly lived life, for we cannot accept their lifestyles as normal life in our church.

We feel that by the time Tanzanian leadership is accepted in the International Moravian Conferences or Synods, they would not be accepted to lead the majority. Even if we are cornered into taking the financial support of provinces which accept homosexuals, we will let the funds go; we shall remain with Jesus, our Lord and Savior. We are willing to fellowship with the roots in Europe, but we can not choose to associate with provinces who accept homosexuals. We have biblical reasons for not accepting homosexuals.

We know that we are all sinners, ourselves included. And we know that we were all

created by God and that Jesus Christ came to save all mankind from all sins, including homosexuality. Yet we simply do not accept their way of life. According to African religious, cultural, and moral values, we can not accept homosexuality as part of the normal living standard. Thus all of these objections cement our refusal of homosexuality; we have no basis to accept homosexuals.

One Tanzania pastor had a study tour in Canada in 1993. In the course of his travels one day, someone who he did not know was taking him from place to place. He started to speak against homosexuals while traveling with this person, and just listened to his talk. When they arrived at their destination, the lady left him there saying, "I am a sinner. I cannot drive you any more. Please look for those who are like you." It was costly for him, but in Tanzania we feel it was a worth cost.

The Moravian Church in Tanzania is not ready to change its mind, even if the Unity Synod commissioned a committee to study the issue of homosexuality. To us it is a waste of God's money to discuss the matter. This issue will be a dividing factor in future for the Moravian Church.

Mission work has been spoken so much in our Church. There were times when our Church was called a pioneer in mission work, and we were pleased to hear it. In 2001 we held our 2<sup>nd</sup> International Moravian Church Mission Conference in Herrnhut. We had many good resolutions. But I see that papers are remaining on Church shelves. The main challenge for

mission work is the availability of funds. It seems that there are very few people who are willing to give money for evangelism. The Tanzania Provinces have written project proposals for mission outreach, but they seem to fall on deaf ears. Today it is our challenge to speak as a church obedient to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, even though the Church has nothing to financially give to send people to where they are called. Our Church has to look for different ways to fulfill our evangelistic work. The Moravian Church in Tanzania is growing, but we would have grown faster if funds were available to enable the evangelists and preachers to reach out to new places.

The Provinces which are better off financially should look afresh to the question how they should help financially, so that our Great Commission is fulfilled. The Church seems to be very busy with social work, and that is also very important, but should we not emphasize that work over the evangelistic work.

There is another challenge facing the church. This challenge is marriage. In past years, people looked to Christian couples as examples of better marriages. Today the family unit is shaking. The world is moving fast, marriages cause people to slow down, and so the number of divorces are increasing. We have many single mothers and poor parents who are not able to sustain their families in our society. The church has to address this very serious situation.

It is becoming evident that it will not be long until the charismatic and revival members will take the Church in their hands. If that

happens there are going to be many activities in our church which are not necessarily connected to the Moravian Church as we know it today. But the church is challenged to include all groups. In 1960s, when the East African Revival swept through our Church, leaders like the late Bishop Teofilo Kisanji helped the church stay inclusive. This is our challenge, not only in Tanzania as mentioned before, but also in

Europe, America, and Asia. We need each other for the extension of God's Kingdom on earth.

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## **Some Thoughts on the Subject of Missions**

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In the following discussion I would like to combine some fruits of my reading with other thoughts which have continued to occupy me in recent years. Perhaps this will make clear how fascinating I find the various aspects of the subject of missions and how important I see these for the vitality of our church and all others. They are tiles of a mosaic and pieces of thought which, in my opinion, are worth further exploration.

### **Rediscovery of an ambivalent concept**

For some years now we have been experiencing renewed attention to the subject of missions in European churches. This certainly is in part a result of the growing secularization of our societies which forces the Church to consider its image. The Ecumenical Council of the Netherlands just released a paper in which churches are called to finally take the fundamental changes in Dutch society seriously and to "throw the net to the other

side". The image refers to John 21:5 where Jesus urges the disciples who have caught nothing all night long to throw their nets to the other side of the boat.

On the other hand one notices that in the churches themselves—except for those regular "specialists" in mission—that basically the term "mission" is gladly avoided. Mission projects must deal with the fact that church mission work in the narrow sense is rarely supported by congregational giving. Instead aid for natural disasters, the fight against poverty, or educational projects have stronger appeal.

Mission is a burdened concept. This is due in part to a continued blanket image of its colonial-based history and partly to a certain perplexity in considering what mission could mean today. It is precisely in circles that consider themselves enlightened-liberal that one shirks at the thought of convincing others "of one's own belief," even if one is readily willing in a secular