

# Fulneck Moravian Church Magazine

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**Minister: Rev. James Woolford**      The Parsonage, 38 Fulneck, Pudsey, LS28 8NT  
tel: 0113 256 4828      email: james.woolford@moravian.org.uk      www.fulneck.org.uk  
The British Province of the Unitas Fratrum (Moravian Church), Registered Charity Number 251211  
Editor: Sr Mary Holmes      tel: 0113 2558547      email: mary@woodhall28.co.uk

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

Thanks to Trevor Auty, this month our book is 'The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart' by Jan Comenius. Trevor helped me to consider three questions – who is Comenius? Why is this book important? What is it about?

The first question is certainly the easiest to answer. Comenius was born in a Moravian village in the area of Fulneck, now the Czech Republic, in 1592 and died in 1670. Having grown up in a church linked to the Bohemian Reformer John Huss, Comenius went on to become a bishop of the Unity of Brethren, hence his importance to our Moravian Church. He was also a great philosopher, theologian and educator: he was one of the early champions of universal education and is known as the 'father of modern education,' setting out principles still followed in Moravian schools today.

'The Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart' is generally regarded as his most influential work and is known as a gem of Czech literature. In his youth Trevor was taught about Amos Comenius and inspired by that. In his old age (note from editor: he said this, not me!) he prefers to refer to Jan Komenski (his name in the Czech language). That comes to us through the freedom to speak in our native tongue about people who were ready to change their status from citizen to refugee, and that is completely relevant to our life today.

As a young man Trevor, with Elaine his beloved wife at his side, had to make a difficult decision between the Congregational Church and the Moravian. He came to this book by Comenius during that time and has returned to it many times since. At a practical level Trevor values it for telling

the early history of the Moravian Church. It is about a group of Christians persecuted and shunned in their homeland: they faced the hard choice of reconverting to Catholicism or leaving their homeland. Comenius, like many of his fellow Protestants, left; Trevor sees them as 'stropy,' something he feels can describe him sometimes!

Trevor also finds this book influential because of his love of storytelling, again, something that we can identify as one of Trevor's many skills. As we discussed, Jesus himself was an amazing storyteller; He observed people and wove them into his stories (parables) which sometimes told the hard truths. As someone who appreciates allegorical writing, Trevor is drawn to this writing by Comenius.

In writing this book it is said that Comenius was drawing on Ecclesiastes (The Teacher), the book that starts with 'everything is meaningless.' Certainly, in writing his book Comenius wanted to explore and make sense of the world. Throughout, Comenius uses the image of a city to represent the world. At the beginning of his pilgrimage he finds himself accompanied by Vanity, who he regards as a pair of glasses that can stop us seeing the world with our own eyes. He goes to the marketplace and then visits many different parts of the city. In each he finds strife, confusion and nowhere is there real satisfaction. For example, among the musicians he says it is 'mere amusement and waste of time, I went away.'

**In Essentials: Unity; In Non-Essentials: Liberty; In All Things: Love**

Trevor spoke about the book still being mysterious to him, and that is part of its attraction. The important element is the second part of the title – ‘the Paradise of the Heart.’ Like Ecclesiastes, this pilgrim comes to realise the simplicity in the belief of God. Here Trevor made the link with Zinzendorf who said ‘no Christianity if not of the heart.’ Central to our Church is the heart and the joy in a life serving God. Throughout his book Comenius considers how we can embrace differences without being overly critical, surely a message still so important to us, our Church and our world.

We ended our conversation about this influential book by reading the final verses of Ecclesiastes and looking at some wool work by Elaine.

‘Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

For God will bring every deed into judgement, including the hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.’ Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12 verses 13-14.

Elaine was highly skilled at crewel work, a Jacobean embroidery using fine wool threads, of which the photograph is one example. As you will know the underneath of embroidery can be full of loose threads and knots, surely how we see our world, while the finished creation is a thing of beauty which is what God sees.

A sincere thank you to Trevor Auty for his hospitality and willingness to share this story with us.

*Sr Mary Holmes*



One example of crewel embroidery by Elaine Auty.



## **HOLY HABITS** **Missional discipleship as a way of life**

“They broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all people.”

For the next two months we'll be focusing on the Holy Habit of gladness and generosity. We're going to be holding our next Holy Habits **faith lunch** after the service on **12 November**.

This Holy Habit gives us the opportunity for us all individually, and as a church together, to review all that we have: our resources, time, gifts and experiences. How do we use what God has given us? At different stages of our lives the balance between giving and receiving may change. I saw this very clearly with my parents who had always been very active members of their church. As they grew older and less able to physically join in they were often on the phone to many others listening to their concerns and praying for them. Instead of offering lifts to people they were the ones who needed lifts. They found a different way of using their talents even though at first it was hard for them to accept their changing roles.

There are lots of hymns going round in my head as I type this but one in line in particular stands out “Freely, freely, you have received, freely, freely give.” This is a direct quote from Matthew 10: v 8. We have each been blessed with different talents and using them together we can achieve so much more than doing things alone. This was highlighted at the recent autumn fair where so many people gave of their time and talents to make it such an enjoyable event where we reached out to many people in the local community.

John 3: 16 shows God's generosity. “For God so loved the world he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Next month we will be celebrating the birth of this baby who changed the world. Maybe it's not a coincidence that we're looking at gladness and generosity now.

Most gracious God, all good things come from you and are signs of your love.  
May our gratitude fill us with gladness, and our gladness with generosity,  
That we may express our joy in the service of others,  
And give in thankfulness for what we have received,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

### **Ruth Strong Memorial Organ recital. Thursday 26 October**

The third autumn **organ recital** starts at 11am.

Professor Graham Barber will be the organist. No need to book, just come along and appreciate the music.



**Yorkshire District Choral Festival: led by the Moravian Singers.**  
**Sunday 26 November: 18.00. Fulneck Church.**

## Christmas Tree Festival: 1—2 December

We start our Christmas celebrations by welcoming back the Clifton and Lightcliffe Brass Band at 19.30 on Friday 1 December. Tickets are already on sale online via the church Facebook page or from Sr Allison. We'll even let you pay at the door!

On Saturday 2 December we'll open our doors at 10.30 so everyone can enjoy the array of trees that will adorn the church, many of which will have been decorated by local groups. The day will end with carols at 17.00 in church.

In order to make this event a huge success we'll need some help. Can you spare a few hours to steward at the band concert and serve the mulled wine and mince pies afterwards? Maybe you'd rather steward in church on the Saturday or help with the refreshments? Please sign up on the sheet in the Bell Room.



## *FULNECK DRAMA GROUP: 14 – 18 November 2023: 19.30 in the Comenius Centre*

### *Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw*

All are welcome. Tickets can be obtained from Chris Robbins.



## ***SOUL SISTERS: MAMMA MIA!***

***TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER: AT 19.30 IN THE BB HALL.***

All welcome. More details will be shared in the coming weeks.

Not a Greek island but a chance for some festive fun.



### **CRAFT GROUP**

The group will meet at Sr Vi Hayton's: 13 and 27 November, 14.00.  
Angel making will continue ...



