
MORAVIAN CHURCH – UNITAS FRATRUM

Office of the Unity Board Administrator



October 16, 2024

To the Worldwide Moravian Unity

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where we have gathered as pastors and church leaders to participate in a conference celebrating the recent recognition of “Moravian Church Settlements” as a transnational UNESCO World Heritage Site. This site includes the historic settlements of Bethlehem, Christiansfeld in Denmark, Gracehill in Northern Ireland, and Herrnhut in Germany, which are seen to exemplify the unique architectural and spiritual heritage of the Moravian Church (www.moravianchurchsettlements.org).

The World Heritage Committee noted that the site “Moravian Church Settlements” bears “exceptional testimony to Moravian Church principles and the faith, way of life, and distinct religious and social ideals and practices of the community that are expressed in the layouts, architecture, and craftsmanship of the settlements.” It was acknowledged, moreover, that “together, these settlements represent the transnational scope and consistency of the international Moravian community as a global network.”

As we celebrate the honor of World Heritage inscription, we are mindful that this is a recognition not just for our four settlements, but truly an appreciation of the larger Moravian network of communities to which we belong. The concept of network and global connectedness stands in the center.

For this reason, we are reaching out to you. We believe that the new World Heritage title offers many opportunities, not just for our towns and settlements, but for the larger Moravian Church and all congregations. It is no small thing that outside experts on cultural heritage have seen something special in our shared Moravian tradition. This should be an encouragement to live our faith and tell our story with confidence and pride.

We expect that in the years ahead more people will be interested to know who we are and what we believe. Let us use this as a mission opportunity, giving witness to Christ as we share our heritage with others.

We also see World Heritage as an opportunity to strengthen the network of our larger Moravian community. Examples for cooperation could include learning more about our shared architectural and cultural heritage, educational programs, mutual visits, and exchange of information. And, of course, being connected also means shared prayer, worship, and fellowship.

In all of these things, the new World Heritage recognition reminds us of the biblical teaching that in Christ we are one body and members of one another, called to share in each other's joys and concerns.

In this spirit, be assured that we will keep the wider Moravian perspective before our eyes, as we continue to be a voice for the Moravian Church in the World Heritage project. We invite you to share any questions or concerns with us and to keep this endeavor in your prayers. This we ask in the name of Christ our Chief Elder whom we all serve.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Janel Rice, Central Moravian Church, Bethlehem, PA

Rev. Dr. Jørgen Bøytler, Christiansfeld Congregation, Denmark

Rt. Rev. Sarah Groves, Gracehill Moravian Church, Northern Ireland

Rev. Dr. Jill Vogt and Rev. Dr. Peter Vogt, Herrnhut Congregation, Germany

