



## Unity Information Newsletter

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### Wupperthal – From the distress after the disaster

On January 16, 2019, a reporter from the South African news portal “Eyewitness News” visited the congregation of Wupperthal in the Cederberg Mountains and found people there who are rising from the ashes of their ruined houses two and a half weeks after a devastating conflagration. “Rising from the Ashes” is one of two reports she wrote after her visit. The reports impressively show the efforts of people to find their way back into the everyday life. And they reveal that traumas will probably continue for a long time. Although there is help from home and abroad and the emergency aid center is overflowing with second-hand goods and clothing, it will still take time until the construction of houses.

### Coordinating the help for Wupperthal

Godfrey Cunningham and Martin Abrahams, president and vice president of the Moravian Church in South Africa, provided an official statement on the organization of relief efforts for Wupperthal, whose town center on December 30/31, 2018 was destroyed to almost 50 percent by a major fire.

They also informed about the still existing need for help. Offices have been set up in 14 different locations in the Western Cape, where help for Wupperthal will be co-ordinated in the coming weeks. Given are the names of 20 contact persons with contact details. A report dated January 22, 2019, says that "the public's positive response to the request for help for Wupperthal far exceeded expectations."

### Videos from choir competitions in Jamaica

From time to time, competitions of children and youth choirs take place in the Jamaican Unity Province (about 8,500 members in 65 congregations). The latest of these were the "Provincial Youth Rally", and the "Four Paths Harvests Service" at the Covenant Moravian Church in Kingston, which both took place at the end of 2018. Most of the choir performances contain a mix of instrumental music, song and dance. The mood is always great for both the active and the listening. In general, the singers wear simple choir clothing. In Jamaica modern music dominates in the congregations with modern instruments. Brass choirs like in Europe do not exist. A specialty is instead the »Jamaica drum«, which is provided by Steel Bands.

### Training for health workers in question

Because Surinam is in an economic crisis, the government does not pay the promised grants to the "Medische Zending" (Medical Mission). Due to this the training of health assistants to work in the interior is under threat. The work of the health assistants is important because they provide the primary health care to the sick and do most of the work on their own: medication, health care education, vaccinations, baby care, wound care, births. For serious problems, a doctor can be consulted by radio and a rescue flight can be requested in an emergency. For the implementation of the third year course from a four year training, 25,000 Euros (28,000 US\$) are needed. Among other things, the internships of health assistants at interior polyclinics are being financed with this money.

### Havana after the tornado

A tornado devastated considerable parts of the Cuban capital Havana within 15 minutes on the evening of January 27, 2019. Countless houses and immense material assets were destroyed. The electricity supply and the telephone network collapsed. Streets and roads were impassable. According to official figures, three people were killed and 172 people were injured. Many of them are in the hospital. Scientists assume that the tornado swept across Havana at a speed of 300 kilometers per hour. Armando Rogelio Rusindo, who is since one year bishop of the Moravian Church and living in Havana, has informed the world-wide Unity of Brethren by e-mail about the situation in the capital.

### Advisory Board has been reconstituted

At a meeting on January 31, 2019, the Advisory Board of the "Unity Women's Desk" based in Winston-Salem, NC, was reconstituted. The new coordinator, Julie Tomberlin (USA), who had already been elected a short while ago, took over the management after a period of training by her predecessor, Patricia Garner. Two vacant posts on the Executive Board, which resulted from the statutory retirement of Angelene Swart (South Africa) and Sallie Greenfield (GB) have now been refilled. The new board members are Blair Couch (USA, Bishop of the Moravian Church) and Rachel-Juliana Lwali (Tanzania, Western Province). The remaining officiating board members are Muriël Held (Suriname) and Erdmute Frank (Germany).

### Health project in the D.R. Congo gets funding

The health project that Moravian Church in the D.R. Congo – with the assistance of and in collaboration with Brødremenighedens Danske Mission (Danish Moravian Mission) – has been carrying out on the west bank of Lake Tanganyika for many years can go on. The Danish development fund "Civilsamfund i Udvikling" (Civil Society in Development) has pledged a subsidy of 3.5 million kroner (about 475,000 euros of 540,000 US\$). The project, which covers 22 remote villages of the Moba region, focusses to significantly improve the health of children and the living conditions of women in the next three years. Due to the politically unstable situation in the D.R. Congo after the recent elections, the start of the project had to be postponed.

### Ideas for the future presented and commented

At the end of January 2019, young men and women trained as teachers at the "Bethlehem Moravian College", Malvern / St Elisabeth, Jamaica, were commissioned to design posters that would express their short-term and long-term expectations and dreams in terms of one's own

life as well as the future of their country. Later on, the posters, which were very different in shape, color and design, were presented to each other and commented on similarities and differences. The history of the "Bethlehem Moravian College" began with the training of young women to become teachers, meanwhile it has a much broader range of training.

### Theses on social peace in Nicaragua

A group of 11 EU parliamentarians led by Ramón Jáuregui (Spain / PSOE) visited the Republic of Nicaragua and formulated 15 theses on social peace in the country. The theses, publicized on January 26, 2019, call on Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega (FSLN) to release all political prisoners, to reinstate banned human rights groups, and to resume dialogue with the opposition. This is the only way to end the violence and to overcome the political crisis in the country, which has been ongoing since April 2018. These theses should not be seen as outside interference, but as encouragement for the people in the country to find their own solution to the crisis.

### „erlassjahr.de / Jubilee Germany“ calls for debt moratorium

The Caribbean is one of the regions most threatened by climate change world-wide. The debt relief network "Jubilee Caribbean" demands that states that have become victims of hurricanes are put in a position to suspend their debt service. Such a moratorium and debt rescheduling negotiations release urgently needed funds for emergency aid and reconstruction following a disaster. A negative example is Barbuda: The island was on September 6 and 7, 2017 almost completely destroyed by Hurricane "Irma". A US\$ 3 million debt repayment to the IMF was due on the same night. Nevertheless, it had to be paid even though the money was urgently needed for victim assistance and damage elimination.

### 150 years ago: Mission School opened in Niesky

On February 1, 1869, the Missionary School of the Moravian Church began their operation in Niesky. This school was mostly attended by unmarried craftsmen, who received a theological and pedagogical education before being sent out into the mission fields. They also studied geography, history of religions and non-European cultures, became familiar as well as languages, accounting, photography, principles of hygiene and the treatment of disease. Affiliated to the school were a carpentry and a blacksmith shop. Until the closure of the school in World War I, 313 missionaries were trained. Until the establishment of the Mission school in 1869, craftsmanship, love for the Savior and probation in the church were sufficient for the missionary ministry.