

# The Mantle of the Moravians

***"Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow Him."***

These words sum up the cry of a group of men, women, and children who abandoned their lives to the cause of Christ. These bold lovers of God are credited with being the initiators of a 100 year twenty-four hour a day prayer movement as well as launching the modern missions movement. Their focus on experiencing God, knowing Jesus intimately, and emphasizing unity in the Church were years ahead of their time. This group is called the Moravians, and their movement can be traced back over 550 years!

This brochure is a brief history of this group of people and their amazing history. The Moravians had a profound influence on Northwest Georgia, and we hope to honor them by telling their story.



## THE HISTORY OF THE MORAVIANS



The origins of the Moravians can be traced back to 50 years before Martin Luther's reformation and the starting of what we call the Protestant Church. The first organized church was started in a village named Kunwald, Bohemia in 1452 when a group of people organized under the name the "Unity of the Brethren". This is the official name of the movement. Their goal was to be *"pure and follow the Master and Him alone."*

History has shown that they were a people that were spiritual forerunners ahead of their time. Their beliefs were not widely adopted by Christians until many decades later.

**Relationship Church**

Through persecution and the backlash of the Roman Catholic Church against the Reformation, the Moravians were reduced to a very small number of people and were almost entirely eliminated. After their start in Bohemia, many in the Unity of the Brethren ended up in an area of Germany called Moravia. This is how they came to be known informally as the Moravians.

The church was revived from near extinction in 1722 – 270 years after their birth - when the Moravians banded together with a group called the Waldensians to form the United Brethren in Germany. They relocated on a German estate owned by Count Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf. Count Zinzendorf became the main force in reigniting the Moravians and propelling them forward to their new destiny. Their place on this German estate was called Herrnhut (The Lord's Watch). Ten years later, Herrnhut started what would become the center of a worldwide missionary movement. Just as the original Moravians were forerunners in doctrine and the practice of Christianity 180 years earlier, this group of Moravian descendents would continue to be forerunners in missionary evangelism and devotion to the Lord.

Between 1732 and 1760, 226 missionaries entered service in ten foreign countries. This was no small feat. Within 20 years, the Moravians sent out more missionaries than the Anglicans and Protestants had sent out in the previous 200 years! Over time, the Moravians had 3 members overseas in missions for every 1 member at home! All this was accomplished by men with little or no theological education. The first two missionaries to Greenland were gravediggers!

They were men and women of incredible zeal and apostolic fortitude. When these missionaries left their home church, they were provided with enough money to reach their destination. Once they got there, they were expected to fend for themselves.

Mantles are not a thing to be taken lightly. A quote by an unknown author says it this way:

*"I believe that every great man of God has left a mantle behind, but few have accepted, and few have put to use. And few have been worthy to wear that mantle because it demands the same lifestyle, the same dedication, the same suffering, the same tears, the same prayer life, the same dangers, the same loneliness, the same deprivation, the same rejection, and being maligned as the one who first wore it. It is not easy to accept the mantle when so much pain is attached to it. It's not just a case of glamour, glory, and fame. There is a lot more involved with the mantle of our predecessors who leave us at the end of their ministry."*

Only God gives and takes away mantles. This is because a mantle is simply His presence to accomplish something.

Here is a summary of just a few of the characteristics of the early Moravian church:

- *100 years of 24-7 Prayer*
- *Experiencing God and Knowing Jesus*
- *Focus on Unity around Jesus*
- *Discipleship and Training*
- *Passion for Music*

It is our believe that when we see these characteristics begin to appear in the Church of Northwest Georgia, it is due to the fact that the 'Spirit' of these things began in this area over 175 years ago. When our churches begin to move in these things, it means that we are walking in the shoes of great men and women of faith – our forefathers – of over 8 generations ago! We honor these forerunners and pray that their memory will live long and their work see its completion.

They held the longest tenure of any missionary society to the Cherokee Nation.

Of the 387 treaties or covenants made by the governments of the colonies, England, and the United States, none were kept. The only two covenants that were kept were made between the Church and the Cherokee. The first was the Brainerd Covenant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The second was a relational promise made with the Moravians in Spring Place. Both of these missions kept their word to the Cherokee and chose to remove themselves westward along with their Native American family.

The land is awaiting the return of those who have made covenant together. We pray that God will once again restore the Cherokee heritage in our land. One way that we practically honor their memory is to continue the work of those who ministered to them. II Chronicles 7:14 says, *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”*



### STEWARDING THE MANTLE

A mantle was left in Northwest Georgia that was worn by the Moravians. Their work was not finished through no fault of their own. It is our desire to honor their sacrifice, vision, and steadfastness to see the principles they believed in come to fruition. It is our desire to see

the spirit of their work completed.

God is looking for a people who will answer the call to take up parts of this mantle and complete the work that He started. This is a big call and can only be given by God.

So committed were these Moravian men to the mission field that they even took their wives and little ones with them. They lived, died, and were buried in the land they adopted for Christ, rarely ever returning back to their sending church. Their missionary zeal was under girded by a twenty-four hour a day prayer watch that lasted for 100 years in Herrnhut!

The Moravians were also known for their radical evangelical preaching, songfests, love feasts, and private devotions. An unusual aspect of the group was their emphasis on fellowship instead of doctrinal creeds. The Moravians had the motto – *“In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity.”* The Count himself declared, *“I have one passion; it is He and He alone.”* Note that Count Zinzendorf stressed one critical issue that should be echoed in our generation: the importance of experiencing God!

### FROM HERRNHUT TO SPRINGPLACE



In 1735, a group of settlers from Herrnhut set out on a ship headed for Savannah, GA to establish a new mission- their first in America. It was on this ship that John Wesley was challenged by one of the

Moravians to decide if he really did love Christ, or if he was just following a religious system. He was faced with his lack of love, and made the decision then and there to dedicate His life to Christ. Wesley went on to found the Methodist denomination, and always remembered his encounter with the extraordinary Moravian fellow on the ship headed to America.

After five years with no success, the Moravians made the hard decision to leave Savannah. They settled in Pennsylvania on the estate of George Whitefield. The next year, the settlements of Bethlehem and Nazareth were established.

In 1753, Moravians from the Pennsylvania settlements established Wachovia and Bethabara, the first communities in North Carolina. On January 6, 1766, the town of Salem, NC began construction. Salem is the headquarters of Morningstar Ministries, a forerunner ministry of the work that Relationship Church and the Spring Place House of Prayer are doing in Northwest Georgia.

In 1801, at the invitation of Cherokee leaders, the Salem Moravians established Spring Place Mission near Chatsworth, GA. The success of the Spring Place Mission led to the founding of the Oothcaloga Mission in Calhoun, GA in 1822.



### MINISTERING TO THE CHEROKEE

Reverend Abraham Steiner and Gottleib Byhan began the Spring Place mission by building a small cabin with their own hands on land given by Chief Vann of the Cherokee. A school was started in 1802 with two pupils. Talk about small beginnings!

Some things to note about the Moravian mission at Spring Place are:

The primary method of reaching the Cherokee was to run a school to train the local people. Everyone had to work in the fields to pay their way. To receive the full benefits of schooling the children roomed and boarded at the mission.

They welcomed ministers and people of all faith as long as they loved the Savior and spoke English. The visitors they had included a Jewish rabbi, Episcopal priest, Quaker elder, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists. The Spring Place Mission became a model of ministering, education, unity, and European farming techniques to many other missionary enterprises.

Music was a large part of their services and heritage. 250 years earlier, during the great Reformation period, the Moravians were the first Protestants in all of Europe to publish a hymn book. Out of all the Protestant churches, they were known to have the best developed music departments. Their people would sing the hymns day and night when other protestant churches barely even sung in the church services. Here is a quote by a leading church leader of the day from another denomination that describes the impact the Moravians had on the country of Germany through their music:

*“Your churches surpass all others in singing. For where else are songs of praise, of thanksgiving, of prayer, and instruction so often heard? Where is there better singing? In your churches the people can all sing and take part in the worship of God.” - Esrom Rudinger*

At Spring Place, many times when an interpreter was not available, they would simply play music and let the Spirit of God minister. It is thought that the first organ played in Georgia was at Spring Place! Musical forerunners!

The Moravian mission in NW Georgia ended tragically. In the early 1830's, the Cherokee were forced to leave the area by the State of Georgia in what is known as the Trail of Tears. The Moravians decided to leave with the Cherokee and never returned to the area. On January 1, 1833, the Moravians were ousted from the area. The Moravian missionaries labored in this area for more than 30 years.