

A COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR OF PEC - EWI PROVINCE

The Information

"I must turn aside and look at this great sight..." When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Exodus 3 Vs. 3-4 (NRSV)

February, 2020

Inside This Issue

Rev. Algernon Lewis Chairman of PEC

Advance the Kingdom – S.H.I.F.T.

This is the clarion call for members of the Moravian Church Eastern West Indies Province. This is not a theme for a year but for the season or period of our current location. The goal is to get the theme on members' lips and in their hearts so that when the various strands of the theme are unpacked and received, we would all be positioned for a move of the Spirit of God in repositioning the church.

As shared in our previous issue, S.H.I.F.T. stands for "seek and submit"; "hear and heed"; "imagine and insight"; "focus and function"; and "totally transformed." As each of these sub-themes is unpacked there is much biblical truth to captivate the hearts and minds to create the transformation

that must come to each of us if this church is to be better aligned with the plans and purposes of God.

In January's issue, the focus was on "seek." We saw Moses being sought by God and eventually seeking God on the way to being used by God as a mighty deliverer. After seeking God or even while seeking God, we are called to submit.

What does it mean to submit? The word "submit" is not a pleasant word for many. A preacher declared that "submit" is not a bad word. However, he conceded, that it was usually found in "bad company" such as physical, psychological, and spiritual abuse. To submit is the act of vielding to another, or give way to another. Relative to God, being submitted is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God and that God's authority is greater. Jesus' declaration, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42) shows this clearly. Jesus had other plans, "remove this cup from me," but he submitted to the authority of his father. How does this work for the church in 2020? There are no formulas or detailed blueprints to follow. Matters of faith are uniquely adaptive in that we respond to them as they arise.

Vision Statement

A Church - Transformed. United, Victorious in Christ

Mission Statement

By the grace of God, we seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ; without distinction, we use all that we possess to call all peoples to the truth of the Gospel through worship, evangelism, discipleship and service.

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Mailing Address

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Let us continue to look at Moses. When Moses turned aside to see the burning bush that was not consumed, God instructed him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. Moses submitted and obeyed. The directive was simple. When he was told about deliverance for the Israelites, submitting was not as easy. He resisted, preferring his own assessment of himself, rather than God's knowledge of his abilities. Sadly, this continued with Moses as he persisted to question God, believing that God had made a mistake.

As we contemplate what submission looks like for us as individuals, I suggest that we should not walk away from those conversations with God. God has already chosen persons for tasks and the gifts and call of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). Resist the temptation to look at your abilities or lack thereof and think of all the ways that this could not possibly be from God. Invest time to wrestle with God to ensure that you hear God clearly. If there is a secret to submitting to God, it might have something to do with an individual's ability to hear God well. Like Moses, many people hear God through the filter of their sense of self, other people's sense of who they are, or even through current trends. Whereas all these assessments may be right, God's choice is perfect. So, we need to learn how to silence the noise.

Noise is a reference to the mental chatter that often derails or delays the plan of God. To silence the noise, there must be a recognition that God is the ultimate power and the source of all things. Persons committed to silencing the noise recognize that productivity in the economy of God is God's prerogative and not dependent on human effort. This is what Moses was learning in the exchange – it is not about you Moses; your part is to yield, to give way to the greater authority that stands above you. In this conversation, the noise of personal competency and ability, of external pressure to perform (expectations of those to be delivered), of personal preferences, and even for external validation, had to be quieted so that the controls could be handed over to God.

This was new for Moses. He needed help. God instructed Moses to "cast it on the ground" (4:3) - the rod that was in his hand. That which was in Moses' hand became a serpent from which Moses ran. God called him back to take hold of the serpent of which he was afraid. As he submitted to the directive, the serpent became a rod again. God continued to coach Moses about what it meant to submit to God by instructing him to place his hand in his bosom (4:6). When he removed his hand, it was leprous. He was again instructed to place it in his bosom and remove it and that leprosy was removed.

By these demonstrations, God was saying to Moses, as you submit to my plan for your life, these abilities flow into you from me. The abilities are not resident in Moses but in God who releases them as Moses submits to God. Moses was not convinced as the noise was still in his head reminding him of his perceived lack of eloquent. One would think that if God could turn a dead rod into a living serpent and cure leprosy, that God could put words in Moses' mouth. But Moses thought otherwise and that affected the degree of his submission to God. The noise in Moses' head was never completely silenced so that even when he got victories following the directives of God, he kept listening to other sounds that contracted with the voice of God.

This is a powerful truth for all who wish to submit to God. We must deal with the noise or we will forever doubt what God is doing in our lives, through our lives, and because of our lives. Noise is part of the human condition. Yet still, God calls us to defy the noise the same way Jesus challenged Peter to defy the noise when he called him to come out of the boat and come to him. In other words, when Jesus called Peter, Peter had to defy his logical thoughts about the nature of water and the rolling waves, and submit only to the directive of Jesus – Come (Matt 14:29). When Peter refocused on the noise (the waves and winds), he started to sink but was quickly saved by Jesus in response to his call.

Anyone who desires to submit to God must contend with the noise but affirm that God is greater. How might we submit to God? Submission comes with knowledge and experience. Put another way, get to know God. There is no substitute for having a deep, personal knowledge of God. To be clear, all human knowing of God is profoundly limited - God is infinite and we are finite (Isaiah 55:9 & Romans 11:33-34). Yet God reveals the divine self so that we may know God and submit to God. Each experience of God is to teach us about God. Reading Scripture reveals the nature of God. . Hearing other people talk about their experiences of God is also a teaching moment about the nature of God. While each experience may not reveal something new about God, God may have orchestrated the event to reinforce what was already learnt about the divine nature.

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The Significance of Christmas

By Rev. Kevin St. Hill

Grace and peace my family in Christ, the honour is mine to aid us in reflection on a compelling, yet increasingly contentious topic in Christendom, that we would do well to confront and reconcile within our section of God's vineyard.



The topic that I am referring to is Christmas. I acknowledge that this

is an out of season topic, but it would do us well to fortify ourselves with the following knowledge, so that as we eventually enter into Advent, should the Lord tarry, we would be able to celebrate with even greater conviction, in circumstances where it may have been lacking. Ever so often , in my brief time on earth, I either find myself engaged in, or in the periphery of a discussion, where the rhetoric, begins to take the form that sounds something like this : " Christians should not be in the practice of celebrating Christmas, because it is a pagan holiday! We need to check our history! We're doing the wrong thing!"

The previously mentioned, have been charges made out to me, and charges I have overheard. Charges that dare not go unaddressed, for it is a question of our very spiritual culture and identity, which calls us into reflection for the purpose of affirming our faith and our faith practices.

It is my humble belief, that these concerns can all be addressed, under to overarching theme of : "The significance of Christmas." This small piece will take a dual pronged approach, firstly considering the historical significance of Christmas, and then the thematic/ theological significance of Christmas as gleaned from scripture.

Christmas, at its root meaning is: "Christ's mass" (Kelly, 2004) or the Mass of Christ. Which means it is a religious festival in celebration of Christ. This is important because even at its most fundamental level, the focus is on Christ, not on the commercial, mythical elements that the world has diluted the holiday with.

As we consider Christmas, it is useful to note, that this somewhat contentious matter, was a non-issue for the early Church. In fact, if we consider the construction of the cannon, we would see a potent illustration of this truth!

For the honoured 27 Books that comprise the New Testament Cannon, there are only 2 that narrate the birth of Jesus. What can we draw from this? Does this mean that the birth of Christ was unimportant to the early Church? The Birth of Christ was of paramount importance then as it is of paramount importance then why is so little written about it?

The reason for their being only 2 books, which narrate the birth of Christ, was that the early Church was of the opinion that the second advent of Christ would be in short order, so they were hastily getting themselves ready, so that when He arrived, they would be a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice to Him and be welcomed into His Kingdom. And this is reasonable. In circumstances, where we are urgently awaiting a bus, and we hear the bus is close by; we don't stop and get breakfast! We scramble outside to the bus stop so we can get our ride and we worry about eating later!

Only the gospels according to Matthew and Luke, narrate the birth of Christ, and what we can glean from this truth is that the date of the birth of Jesus was not a matter of obsession for the early Church, but they were much more captivated with the meaning of the birth, the kind of life the Child would go on to lead and the implications of those events for the world. As we consider the significance of Christmas, I urge us to let us also adopt this mind-set that date is not where we place our focus, but the significance of the event should be where our energies are centred.

If we scan the scriptures, we see that for the early Church, the birth of Jesus was not accompanied by too much external fanfare. Kelly (2004) attributes this to retention of Jewish practice, as the Church was adopting its own practices. The Canonical New Testament was only completed and codified, after over 200 years, since the passing of Jesus. And with such a tremendous passing of time, the expansion of the Church had also occurred. Incorporating a diverse amount of people , and with the diversification of people came a diversification of practice.

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The early Church went from one where the celebration of birthdays was seen as pagan and sinful to majority of Christians, who were of Jewish descent, to one where it was normalized as non-Jews/Gentiles made up the majority of the Christian populace.

With a shift to the observance and celebration of birthdays in Christianity, there came a need for the recognition of the Nativity of Christ, for by the 2nd century of the early Church wide-spread persecution of the Church was occurring, and the honouring of Christ's birth, became another way to connect with the Master, and that should be at the heart of every Christmas celebration: connecting with Jesus. Kelly (2004) posits that some sections of the early Church began to identify the 6th of January as the day of Christ's birth. Not necessarily because He was born on that day but because that was the day He was held to have been baptized, making it his 'spiritual' birthday'. To this day, the Eastern Orthodox Church observes January 6th or 7th as For the Church in the West: Roman Christmas. Catholics and Protestants, January 6th represents Epiphany, where the Magi visited the newly born Christ-child, symbolizing the global reach of Jesus.

The date of January 6th fell out of favour with the Western Church because as time passed, and Mathematical ability advanced, matching Christ's birth with his death, in terms of season, and since Christ died around the time of the Passover, a Spring time season, was more favoured rather than January. It is at this juncture, a truth must be reconciled. There are many who charge, that the Church should not celebrate Christmas because it coincided, with the celebration of Pagan festivals. To this I submit, that the Church has long had a revisionist approach to culture, where aspects of it promote revelry and other forms of ungodliness. The ideology was to immerse the Church in the culture, without being infiltrated by the untoward aspects of it. Hence, January 6 was also noted to be a pagan Egyptian festival, but the Egyptian Christians wanted to counter that distraction as well. My family in Christ, we still do the same thing today! In one of the congregations I pastor, during Carnival Monday, the Church hosts a time of spiritual retreat, so as to give the membership and community at large another outlet for gathering.

In the Western world, the calendar, held March 25 to be spring equinox, equinox being drawn from the Latin Equi: Equal and Nox: Night, where the day and night are of equal length throughout the day. This day symbolized the rebirth of creation and was seen as the day when God said: "Let there be Light" and as Jesus was the Light of the world, this day held special significance. The Church Fathers then surmised that since March 25, was the day of creation, then it was also the day of conception and if we count 9 months away from March 25, we get the currently celebrated day of December 25! This was also desirable to the Church as it allowed further implementation of cultural revision. For December 25, was around the pagan feast of Saturnalia, where servants were given freedom to do whatever they wanted, they could eat as much as they want, before the wealthy did, they exchanged presents, there was a lot of eating, drinking, merriment, and lewd behaviour. Basically it was a precursor, to the commercialized contemporary view of Christmas that is propagated today! And so by celebrating Christmas on the 25, the Church was effectively countering debaucheries with a call to prayer and moral significance. It is on this premise that we as a Christian community should embrace the 25th as a day of symbolic significance and Holiness, for that is what any Holiday is: a HOLY DAY! We can take solace in knowing that the selection of the day we celebrate Christmas was not out of any Moral or spiritual compromise but of moral and spiritual commitment !

It is on the topic of symbolism that I will now transition briefly into the significance of Christmas as gleaned from the Gospel narratives. In Matthew, we are introduced to Jesus, through a genealogy in Chapter 1, and from this we can glean the undisputable fact, that Jesus was a real person who lived, and dwelt among us. The Genealogy shows his Jewish ancestry, citing Patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, but it also identified, non-Jews of diverse backgrounds, like Tamar, who was a prostitute, and Ruth a gentile widow, who remarried. Showing that Jesus was connected to both Jew and Non-Jew, nomad or noble, male or female.

The Narrative of Matthew also illustrated the truth of scripture, as numerous prophecies, highlighted, were realized through the Nativity of Christ. We see the dawning of the end of earthly corruption as the Advent of Jesus was received with great anxiety by King Herod, who knew that his farcical authority would be undermined.

The Cross cultural reach of Jesus, and the affirmation of his Ministry are also presented through the Matthean narrative, As Jesus, called to wise men to Himself, through a star, which was an especially unique way that only those of their abilities could relate to!

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The Significance of Christmas con'td from page 4

Annual Superintendents' Conference

Truly Jesus calls all of us in ways we can uniquely relate to! Moreover, Egypt, the place of past persecution became the place of future refuge for the Christ Child, signalling his ministry of reconciliation!

With regards to His ministry, we can see that Jesus is most worthy of celebration, as he is presented with Gifts of Gold: fit for a king, Incense – the tool of a priest, and Myrrh- the tool of embalmment, fir for a sacrifice.

In the gospel according to Luke, we are presented with the truth that God is still able to perform miracles, as the conception of Jesus occurs in the womb of a Virgin and the barren couple of Zechariah and Elizabeth conceive!

But for me as a young, African descended Christian, what is especially significant about the Christmas account is that it represented a PARADIGM SHIFT! From patriarchal exclusivity to dynamic inclusivity!

The narrative of Luke highlights an instance where a young, female, girl of low status, is shown to express greater faith than a Priest, who is male and who has age, all symbols of authority through the Jewish lens. Not only does, she show greater faith but the text goes onto highlight her ability as she praises and prophecies through the Magnificat! This Paradigm Shift, is not only with regards to age, stage and gender, but it is economic, for where Matthew illustrated that Magi, came, who were men of ability and status, Luke highlights that shepherds came, common folk. Anyone can come to Jesus! Not just that but anyone can serve Him at the highest level! For Luke introduces us to Simon and Anna, who both ministered before Jesus!

My family in Christ, I conclude, on this note. Christmas is a special and sacred time for us in the Christian Community. There have indeed been charges made that we should not celebrate it because it has pagan undertones and connections. I submit to us, that the date is not as important as what the event itself symbolized. Salvation for the people of the world from sin, and from the conventions perpetuated by sin! In fact when confronting, any connections to pagan behaviour we can take solace, in knowing that any Christian day of celebration was made to counter, not conform to any ungodly behaviour! May our holidays be happy and Holy days indeed!

References

Kelly, J. F. (2004). *The origins of Christmas*. United States, Minnesota: Liturgical Press The Provincial Elders Conference of the Moravian Church Eastern West Indies Province met February 3 - 6, 2020 at the Provincial Headquarters in Cashew Hill, Antigua. The Annual Superintendents' Conference convened February 4 - 6, 2020 as a part of the PEC's first meeting of the year.



L to R front row only Rev. Ezra Parris –Barbados Conf. Rev. Eulencine Christopher VI conf., Rev. Bonnie E.B.W.Smith-Antigua Conf. Rev. Ulston P. Smith-Trinidad Conf. Rev. Esther Moore-Roberts,- Tobago Conf. Rev. Hilton Joseph Kitts Conf.

During the Conference, members of the PEC and Superintendents shared in a Retreat on Leadership Development & Empowerment led by Bishop Conrad Spencer. It was an enlightened and empowering time of reflection. Bishop Kingsley Lewis led the Opening devotions and Rev. Hilton Joseph, Superintendent of the St. Kitts Conference led the Closing devotions and Time of Prayer.

As a part of the Conference, Superintendents reported on their various Conferences. The PEC shared its vision for the Province moving forward and Bro Anselm Richards, Lay Member of the PEC discussed the statistical challenges facing the Province.

In attendance at the meeting were the following persons: Rev. Algernon Lewis - Chairman, Rev. Dr. Errol Connor – Vice Chairman of PEC, Rev. Dr. Adrian Smith – Secretary of PEC, Sis. Karen Challenger-George – Lay Member of PEC, Bro. Anselm Richards, Lay Member of PEC, Sis Elisa G. Hodge – Treasurer of PEC and Sis Megan Samuel -Fields – Assistant Treasurer of PEC. All Superintendents were in attendance: Rev. Bonnie Smith – Antigua; Rev. Ezra Parris – Barbados, Rev. Hilton Joseph – St. Kitts, Rev. Esther Moore-Roberts – Tobago, Rev. Dr. Patmore Smith – Trinidad, and Rev. Eulencine Christopher – Virgin Islands. Everyone in attendance was able to share and fellowship with each and left, united and committed to make the necessary "SHIFT" in order to advance the kingdom of God.

Advance the Kingdom – S.H.I.F.T. *Cont'd from Page 2*

Reinforced learning is to bolster our confidence in the nature of God which should make it easier to submit to the directives of God. An individual's knowledge of God should enhance the capacity to submit to God. If the knowledge of God does not inspire submission, then nothing else will help.

Trust should also inspire submission. To trust is to have a firm belief in someone of something, in this case, God. We learn to trust God through the experiences we have with God. Each experience Moses had, he was learning to trust God. Even though Moses seemed not to trust God in this initial encounter, his actions testified otherwise. He went to his father-in-law to request permission to leave, packed his family, and left (4:20 a). He submitted because he trusted that the God who showed up in the bush, in the rod, and in the leprous hand was on the journey with him. Was he 100 percent sure? Of course not! But he was convinced enough to trade the safety of shepherding in the desert for the risky mission of deliverance in Egypt. He knew the possibility of death; but by this time, he also knew the power of God and the tools he had in his toolkit (4: 20b-21) as a submitted servant of God.

How does this relate to the church? We need to be reminded that the church is a divine organism - the body of Christ. At this moment, the church seems defeated by modernity and all the attendant issues. The current state of the church does not inspire much hope. But, as we contemplate the realities of the church, we are reminded that God is ultimately in charge of the church. This singular fact should draw us into the place to seek God on behalf of the church. As God responds, we must be prepared to submit. It is not strategic plans, critical thinking, innovation or any human activity that will make the difference. Submitting to what God desires for us at this time is where we are called to be. When we seek and submit to God, we will be prompted to shift our mindset and activities. As we allow God to take the lead, the breakthrough will come. When I think about seeking and submitting to God, I think about getting out of the way and allowing God to dictate the pace. As an institutional leader, that is uncomfortable; but as a submitted servant of God, it is my preferred disposition – let go and let God manage the church.

The days ahead are uncertain, meaning, no one knows what will happen next. However, I am confident that as we truly seek God in prayer and fasting and determine to submit to what God instructs, that it will be well. Some would prefer a response with a greater degree of certainty. However, the message that is being sent at this time, is that we are seeking God and submitting to God, believing for new life to come.



L to R Back Bishop Kingsley Lewis and Bishop Conrad Spencer Members of PEC front L to R: Sis. Elisa G. Hodge (Treasurer) Sis. Megan Samuel-Fields (Assistant Treasurer, Rev. Dr. Adrian Smith, Secretary, Rev.Algernon Lewis, Chair, Rev. Dr. Errol Connor Vice-Chair, Sis. Karen Challenger-George, Lay Member and Bro. Anselm Richards Lay Member

Unity Sunday

The PEC Makes the following Announcements:-

Sunday March 01, 2020 is Unity Sunday. It was on this day in, 1457 that the Moravian Church was born. We ask for your continued prayers for the work and witness of our Church.

A special Unity offering will be taken in all Moravian Churches worldwide on that Sunday March 01, 2020 for the continued mission of the church.

Theological Education Sunday

Sunday March 29, 2020 is Theological Education Sunday. On this day annually we remember in prayer our Warden/Tutor and all of our ministers in training.

At present, there is one (1) Minister in training: Sis. Marleen Browne. Our Warden/Tutor is the *Rev. Neilson Waithe*.

Let us remember them especially in our prayers.

A special offering will be taken on March 29, 2020 to go towards the continuing Education of our Minister in Training.

Call Advisory

The PEC Makes the following Announcements:

- 1. The Rev. Dr. Dion Christopher has been seconded to the Moravian Church in North America, Southern Province for five (5) years and has been appointed to serve as the pastor of the Prince of Peace Moravian Church. This call takes effect from March 1, 2020.
- 2. The Rev. Dr. Jeremy Francis has been called to serve as the pastor of the Friedensberg Moravian Church in Frederiksted, St. Croix. This call takes effect from March 1, 2020.
- 3. The Rev. Georgette John-Cotton has reapplied for the pastoral ministry of the Moravian Church Eastern West Indies Province and has been called to serve as the pastor of the Gracehill Moravian Church in Antigua. This call takes effect on March 1, 2020.

Please keep our brothers and sisters and their families in prayer as they continue to walk in obedience to the call of God on their lives.

Unity Prayer Watch 2020

The Unity Prayer Watch is a special service to the world, offered by the worldwide Moravian Church. The Eastern West Indies Province will participate in the Unity Prayer Watch from 12:00a.m April 03 - Midnight April 17, 2020. The Schedule is as follows:

Conferences are asked to observe the time allotted for our members to engage in the unbroken prayer chain. This prayer meeting began on August 13, 1727 when the Moravian Church had its Pentecost experience. The Church was so much on fire that the Prayer meeting lasted for 100 unbroken years.

Let us therefore encourage our members to be in prayer, as we continue to seek God's guidance and direction for our Church and indeed our lives.

Name of	From	То
Conference/		
Mission		
Grenada	12:00a.m.	8:00a.m.
Mission	April 03	April 03, 2020
St. Kitts	7:59a.m.	8:00p.m.
	April 03	April 05, 2020
Trinidad	7:59p.m.	8:00p.m. April 06,
	April 05	2020
Virgin Islands	7:59p.m.	8:00p.m.
	April 06	April 09, 2020
Barbados	7:59p.m.	8:00p.m.
	April 09	April 12, 2020
Tobago	7:59p.m.	Midnight
	April 12	April 14, 2020
Antigua	11:59p.m.	Midnight
	April 14	April 17, 2020

Birthday Celebrants for February

Sis. Adelyn Binta Mgonela	3
Bro. Cortroy Jarvis	7
Bro. Junior Sean Roberts	10
Sis. June Mcmillan	17
Bro. Adrian Smith	21
Bro. Errol Connor	21
Sis. Billie Sterling-Lewis	22
Sis. Esther Moore-Roberts	24

Wedding Anniversary Celebrants for February

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Sis. Georgette John-Cotton & Bro. Vondell Cotton15Bro. Kingsley & Sis. Maureen Lewis19

In Loving Memory of Bro. Ludolph Bown By Bishop Kingsley Lewis

My earliest recollection of Bro. Ludolph Brown goes back to 1965 when he was a counsellor at Provincial Youth Camp at Gracebay.



Since that time, I have had to interact with him through the years and in different capacities. The next time was probably about 1967 when I went with the late Bro. Eddie Terry, lay preacher from Spring Gardens, to conduct a service at Newfield and where I preached my first sermon. On that occasion he gave me much encouragement.

In 1986, I became his pastor for the first time when I assumed the pastorate of Lebanon, Newfield and Potters. Particularly in the meetings of the Board of Stewards or Church Committee as it was then called, he would always give sound advice and appropriate guidance. His commitment to the Church was very obvious and everybody looked up to him.

I returned to the Enon congregation again on three occasions and in more recent years his presence was missed from Sunday morning worship even as he suffered from a back ailment which restricted him to home most of the time.

Following the 1993 Synod in St. Kitts, he was appointed Provincial Treasurer in succession to the late Bro. Bradley Lewis. I served with him on that Provincial Board for approximately three years and give thanks for his service then, particularly as he was a very busy person in his public avocation as Accountant General. Given the long hours he worked, I am sure many others in his position would not have taken on the task of Provincial Treasurer, which can often be a frustrating one.

I give thanks for Bro. Ludolph Brown who remained calm and unruffled at all times, who loved and served God and loved his church.

The service of thanksgiving for the life of Bro. Ludolph Brown will be held at his home congregation, Enon (Newfield) Moravian on Thursday, February 20, 2020.

Please keep Sis. Veronica and family in prayer as they mourn.





8

Only ten minutes away from the stores, shops and banks in St. John's.

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Our balcony provides a refreshing view of undulating hills and valleys.

The conference center has a seating capacity for 200 persons.

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Advance the Kingdom- S.H.I.F.T



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