

# WWF News Update

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## The Footsteps of the Moravian Church

by Pitts Evans

published in **The Morning Star Journal**, Vol. 14-No. 4

**Part 1**

### Introduction

The Moravians first came to my attention as a group that had somehow influenced the life of Reformer, and Methodist founder, John Wesley. I later discovered that they had actually been instrumental in his salvation experience and had greatly impacted his ministry. The group again caught my eye because of a beautiful spot in the mountains of North Carolina known as Moravian Falls. Several dear friends told me that there seemed to be an abiding presence of God at Moravian Falls and in the surrounding area. When speaking of the spiritual climate of this area of North Carolina, they used the term “open heaven” to indicate the

purity of the very atmosphere itself. As I began to make mental notes on this group, I found their footsteps in many unexpected places, both historically and geographically.

We will attempt to trace the spiritual roots and history of the Moravian Church. We will start from their origins



Nikolaus Ludwig, count von Zinzendorf, undated wood engraving.

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**“Jesus in Your Morning”** is heard weekdays at 6am. We will cover **Matthews 4-8** from the **Passion Translation**.

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Listen to Pastor Pitts message Saturdays at 11:00am and 9:30pm and Sunday mornings at 6:30 am. Check out the new open and close and give us your feedback at [pitts@wholeword.net](mailto:pitts@wholeword.net)

**Livestream**

Join us every Sunday morning at 10:30am. Livestream can be viewed [here](#).

## Weekly Events

### Tuesday

**NOVAHOP Prayer Meeting**  
7:00pm - 9:00pm in the  
Sanctuary. Come for a time of  
worship and intercession.

**Prophetic Ministry** is offered  
the first and second Tuesdays  
of the month in the  
Fellowship Hall from 9:10pm.  
Join us on **8/7/18 & 8/14/18**  
[www.novahop.org](http://www.novahop.org)

### Wednesday

**Wednesday Night Bible  
Study in the Chapel at 7pm**  
We are in Deuteronomy  
Come join us and bring a friend.  
Or watch live via livestream at  
[wholeword.net](http://wholeword.net)

### Friday

**Friday Morning Bible  
Study: We are in  
2Chronicles**

Afterward join us for the  
**Mid-day prayer meeting**  
in the Cabin Chapel  
11:30-12:30

in Europe and follow them to their settlements in America. As we trace their spiritual history, we must discuss the powerful impact and influence of Count Nicolaus von Zinzendorf. We will examine the foundations of their theology along with their influence on secular and church history. It is also our intention to look at their amazing chapter in the history of world missions. We will conclude with Moravian Falls and the possible reasons for God to be unusually accessible there.

### General History of The Moravian Church

Many sources tell us that Count von Zinzendorf founded the Moravian Church between 1727 and 1745.(1) The Moravians themselves say that their spiritual history began much earlier. The name “Moravian” identifies the place of the church’s origin as Moravia in Europe. This area, including Bohemia, was located in what is now the Czech Republic. The entire region was converted to Christianity in the mid-ninth century by two Greek Orthodox missionaries, Cyril and Methodius. The area gradually came under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church over the course of the next several centuries. (2)



The Moravians credit the great Czech reformer, John Hus (1369 – 1415) for being the man who brought them back to spiritual independence from Rome.(3) The pre- Reformation church leader Hus, preached justification by faith and the supreme authority of Scripture over a century before Martin Luther posted his 95 Thesis in 1517.(4) Like Luther, Hus sought sweeping reform in the universal Catholic Church. Unlike Luther, who died in his bed, Hus was burned at the

stake as a heretic in 1415 for his reformation efforts.

Within fifty years of his death, the remnants of the followers of John Hus began to call themselves the Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren).(5) The Moravian Church has been officially known as the Unitas Fratrum since 1457.(6) Though heavily persecuted, this group remained committed to the principals of reform that Hus had advocated. They remained active throughout their native Moravia and Bohemia from the initial founding of their movement. This makes the Unitas Fratrum / Moravians the oldest and longest continuing Reformation church. They predate the Lutheran Church by over sixty years.(7) Historians have variously referred to this remnant Moravian group as “Hussites,” “Unity of Brethren,” “United Brethren,” “Bohemian Brethren,” “Moravian Brethren,” or more commonly as the “Moravian Church.”

By the early sixteenth century the Moravian Church numbered at least 200,000 members. They had also provided the people of Bohemia and Moravia with the Bible in their own native languages. Persecution in 1547 led to a partial migration and church expansion into Poland. During these difficult years the church was forced to exist underground. It continued to grow and was eventually led by Bishop John Amos Comenius (1592-1670). The underground nature of the Unitas Fratrum / Moravian Church caused Comenius to refer to it as his beloved “hidden seed.”(8) They survived the ravages of The Thirty Year War and The Peace of Westphalia Treaty in 1648, but were forced to continue as a persecuted underground movement.(9)



### **Count Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf**

The hunted and persecuted Moravians fled to Protestant areas of Germany in the early 1700s. A group of these spiritual refugees settled on the estate of Count von Zinzendorf in 1722. Zinzendorf was born May 26, 1700 and died May 9, 1760. He was the son of an Austrian nobleman. His father died and his mother remarried while he was a very young child. He was brought up by his devout Pietist grandmother, the Baroness von Gersdorf.(10)

At the age of ten, Zinzendorf was sent away to study at Halle under the great Lutheran Pietist, August Francke (1663 – 1727).(11) His religious training was also deeply influenced by the writings of Pietist theologian and Lutheran Pastor, Phillip Spener. Pietism was a spiritual renewal movement that was primarily seeking to revitalize German Lutheranism. It emphasized the study of Scripture, holy living or “pietism” and personal prayer.(12)

The young Lutheran aristocrat, Zinzendorf, was very committed to the Lord Jesus Christ from his youth. He had completely rejected the secular pursuits of his noble contemporaries. His family wanted him to pursue law or some other field of study that would be appropriate for those in his high born position. The young Count wanted to pursue religious studies. Though born with wealth, influence and power, Zinzendorf, found the trappings of European nobility empty and without

meaning. On September 7, 1727 he married Erdmuthe Dorothea Reus, who shared his total commitment to God, the Lutheran Church and Pietism.(13)

Zinzendorf traced his personal relationship to Christ and his intense devotional life to one particular event that took place in 1719. While on a tour of Europe he visited an art gallery and viewed Domenico Feti's *Ecce Homo*, which was a portrait of Christ wearing the crown of thorns. The painting had an inscription that the Count said forever changed his life. "All this I did for you, what are you doing for me?"(14) The nineteen year old Count was powerfully touched in a very personal way by the Holy Spirit. From that moment, Zinzendorf realized that he could never consider himself a follower of Jesus Christ and continue to live the carefree life of a European nobleman. To the horror of friends and family, he dedicated the rest of his life to the service of Jesus Christ.

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1 Note: The 1727 date refers to their famous prayer meeting of May 12, 1727 and the 1745 date refers to the date they were officially recognized as a church in Germany.

2 Moravian Church in America, (online paper, 2003) [www.moravian.org/history](http://www.moravian.org/history), p. 1.

3 Ibid.

4 Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, (Dallas, 1998), p. 103.

5 Robert P. Gwinn, Chair, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micro. Vol. 8*, (Chicago, 1990), p. 310. 6 [Moravian, org/history](http://Moravian.org/history), p. 1

6 [Moravian, org/history](http://Moravian.org/history), p. 1

7 Hyatt, p. 103.

8 [Moravian, org/history](http://Moravian.org/history), p. 1

9 Robert P. Gwinn, Chair, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micro. Vol. 8*, (Chicago, 1990), p. 310.

10 Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, (Grand Rapids, 1983), p. 70.

11 Ibid.

12 Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*. (Grand Rapids, 1996), pp. 383.

13 Robert P. Gwinn, Chair, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micro. Vol. 12*, (Chicago, 1990), p. 921.

14 Tucker, p. 70.

**Next week we will have Part 2 of "Footsteps of the Moravian Church"**