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NOTES ABOUT LIVING AS A
CHRISTIAN

continuous conversion

The Herrnhut community

In October of this year my husband Jarda visited Herrnhut, in Germany. Here is his report:

Christof Lange, pastor of Betlemska Kaple congregation in Prague (a member of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren), has restored, revitalized and reestablished this aging congregation with his fresh ideas.

Reverend Lange is a missionary pastor from Germany, sent to help Betlemska Kaple get back on its feet after forty some years of gradual decline under communism. During my time in Prague, he organized an informative and inspirational trip to Herrnhut, the seat of the Unity of Brethren, in Germany which we wrote about as one of our role models in *Three Things You Can't Do in Prague*. I was fortunate to take part in this daytrip, which included a tour of the surrounding areas, the traditional home of the Lusatian Sorbs (or Serbs, as they call themselves, but not to be confused with the Serbs in the former Yugoslavia).

Originally organized by Count Zinzendorf during the Thirty Years War, the Unity of Brethren have endured and remained faithful to their missionary calling, producing Christian publications in 50 languages. Even the devastating shelling of



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Herrnhut by the Russians at the end of WWII could not destroy the Lord's work in this part of Germany. The restored, serene settlement is another tangible example of the Lord's protection of His own in the midst of adversity.

In organizing this trip, Reverend Lange perhaps meant to remind us of the protocol God has given us, His family, to function at the highest level of love and power. Living in unity and harmony, encouraging each other with uplifting words, using the tongue to give life, love and blessing, showing hospitality, kindness, compassion, and genuine fellowship as I saw in Herrnhut is possible.

During this trip it was clear to me that our heavenly Father had been there before us, as a consuming fire, clearing a path of peace, safety, kindness and abundance of grace. We felt privileged to be in such a blessed place, where time seemed to have stood still.

We witnessed true convergence of Christian worship and faith, in this community of teachable, pliable, humble and effective Christians devoted to missionary work.



John Wesley and Count Zinzendorf at Herrnhut.

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he village of Herrnhut, "The Lord's Watch," (in present day Germany) came about because **on this day June 17, 1722** a little band of religious fugitives from Moravia (in the modern Czech Republic) asked Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf if they might settle on his land. The Count agreed. One Moravian leader was Christian David, a potter who burned with zeal for the things of the Lord.

Zinzendorf, too, was a man of deep religious conviction and piety. At six he had written love letters to Christ. Deeply influenced by Francke and Spener's Pietism, the Count was only kept from becoming a minister by the raw exertion of family and state authority. Nonetheless, he and his wife had dedicated their lives completely to Christ. Eventually he would be chosen bishop of the Moravians. Zinzendorf was appalled at the divisions between churches and hungered to unite the different factions in a spiritual peace. He was the first to speak of "ecumenism." At Herrnhut he learned what the Holy Spirit could accomplish in breaking down denominational walls.

Herrnhut had become a gathering place for many religious exiles. These spoke different languages and had differing customs. Creeds varied. Lutherans, Schwenkfelders, Separatists, Reformed and Brethren lived side by side. Squabbles developed. Zinzendorf found himself moving from home to home speaking with families of their spiritual need. The people began to study the Bible, hold all-night prayer vigils and confess their sins one to another. Zinzendorf established "bands," groups of two, three or more who would encourage each other spiritually. Plans were drawn up to reorganize and unify the community. A sense of expectancy grew.



20th century Herrnhut, Germany

On August 13, 1727, at a baptism and communion service, the Holy Spirit moved through the room. Differences dissolved. All embraced one another in forgiveness and a spirit of love. Christ became central to their thinking. They established a twenty-four hour around-the-clock prayer vigil which lasted one hundred years. The fervent prayers resulted in the sending out of missionaries to many lands--the first Protestant missions outside Europe and North America. Thus Herrnhut reached out and touched other lands. Moravians influenced John and Charles Wesley. Moravian missionary zeal prompted William Carey's efforts to reach India for Christ. "See what these Moravians have done," he said in his appeal to have missionaries commissioned.

Herrnhut was a busy and industrious place. Spinning, weaving, carpentry, pottery, farming and missionary training went on unceasingly. Each evening Zinzendorf selected a scripture to be the watchword for the next day. Often he wrote a hymn to accompany the word. Saturdays and Sundays were days of prayer and worship. Almost every day, each band met to exhort, reprove and pray for one another. Single women and single men lived in separate buildings. In a special home, the children of missionaries were cared for. Truly Herrnhut became a remarkable experiment in Christian community as well as a major catalyst for Protestant missions.

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