

## Historic bells in Moravian Missions in South Africa's Western Cape

*Tertius de Wet\*, Jef L. Teugels\* and Pieta van Deventer\**

### Introduction

Church bells (and other bells) form a rich part of South Africa's cultural history. Bells were brought to South Africa for church and civic purposes from the earliest days of the Dutch settlement at the Cape. To our knowledge, the oldest bell in South Africa that is still in use is the bell hanging at the entrance to the castle in Cape Town. This bell has a founding date of 1697 and there were most probably bells at an even earlier time. This claim is supported by a notice written in 1665 by Wagenaer, the commander of the Cape settlement, in which he mentions that men in the fort were compelled to gather "op het tweede geluijt..."<sup>1</sup> ("at the second ring [of the bell]"). Recently the authors discovered a bell at the Rhenish Church in Stellenbosch that has a founding date of 1664. This bell is still hanging in one of the bell towers of the church, but is currently not in use.<sup>2</sup>

Although much research has been done on historical buildings, including church buildings, in South Africa, hardly any research has focused on the historical bells in the country. In a previous study on the carillon in Cape Town City Hall, our research had to begin almost from scratch.<sup>3</sup> Our ongoing research programme in this field forms part of an initiative to rectify the situation. In the current article we focus on the bells at the Moravian Mission stations in the Western Cape. These mission stations played an important and ground-breaking role in the earliest missionary endeavours in South Africa. The Moravian Church was the first church to open a mission station in South Africa when Georg Schmidt arrived in 1737 to begin his work in Baviaanskloof, now Genadendal. Although the history of the Moravian Church in South Africa and the role it played has been well researched and documented,<sup>4</sup> research into the bells at these mission stations, has not

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\* Tertius de Wet is professor in the Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He has been president of the South African Statistical Association and served as editor of the Association's journal. His research in Statistics is in the areas of distribution theory of quantiles and extreme value theory. This he combines with research in statistical and historical aspects of bells and carillons.

\* Jef Teugels is emeritus professor in the Department of Mathematics, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He has been president of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and the Bernoulli Society for Mathematical Statistics and Probability and has been the ISI's ambassador for Africa since 2011. His scientific interests are in actuarial mathematics, extreme value theory and statistical aspects of music, especially bells and carillons.

\* Pieta van Deventer is senior lecturer in the Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. His research focuses on the acoustical aspects of bells and in comparative measurements of sound and tuning qualities of carillons. This research encompasses the underlying mathematical basis of the overtones as created in bells. However, this research has led to a keen interest in the history of bells.

1. Z. Wagenaer, *Die Dagregister en Briewe van Zacharias Wagenaer, 1662–1666*, edited by A.N. Böeseken (Government Printer, Pretoria 1973), p 184.

2. For information on this early bell, see T. de Wet, J.L. Teugels and P.J.U. van Deventer, *Inventory of Bells in the Western Cape* (Stellenbosch: Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science Technical Report, 2014).

3. T. de Wet, J.L. Teugels and P.J.U. van Deventer, "The Cape Town Carillon: A Forgotten Heritage", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, 26, 2012, pp 31–60.

4. B. Krüger, "The Pear Tree Blossoms", PhD thesis, Rhodes University, 1966; B. Krüger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit: The History of the Moravian Church in South Africa-West, (II), 1869–1960, with an Epilogue, 1960–1980* (Moravian Book Depot,

received the necessary attention from researchers. This article aims to go some way to filling this gap.

### The Moravian Church and its establishment at the Cape

As background to the subsequent sections, we provide a short overview of the founding and growth of the Moravian Church and its establishment at the Cape. See the work by August<sup>5</sup> and that by De Boer and Temmers,<sup>6</sup> for further reading.

The church has its roots in pre-Reformation time, going back to Johan Huss in Bohemia and Moravia (today in the Czech Republic). Huss was rector of the University of Prague, but his ideas for reforming the church brought him into conflict with the church authorities. He died at the stake, but his work was carried on by Gregory, a monk of noble birth. In 1457, Gregory founded a settlement with his faithful friends in the small village of Kunewalde in the German-speaking part of Moravia, on the border of Bohemia.<sup>7</sup> Many people from all over Moravia and Bohemia came to Kunewalde. They called themselves the Brethren of the Law of Christ, indicating their desire to live a Christian way of life.<sup>8</sup> This body of men grew to become what is known as the old Moravian Church.

In 1467 they met in their first Synod and called the newly established church the Jednota Batska (in Latin, the *Unitas Fratrum*), the Unity of the Brethren,<sup>9</sup> a church remarkable not for its doctrine, but its practice; not its opinion, but its discipline. During the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) the old Moravian Church was suppressed and many fled in the diaspora, or simply remained in hiding.<sup>10</sup> They were referred to as the “hidden seeds”.<sup>11</sup> The last bishop of the (old) Moravian Church was Jan Komensky (Latin: Comenius), who through his books had a great influence on the Lutheran pastor, Phillip Spener, author of the book *Pia Desideria*, which led to an evangelical revival in the Lutheran Church, called the Pietist Movement. One of the main characteristics of the movement was personal piety. The spreading of the Gospel was regarded as one of the main fruits of piety, and the followers therefore strongly promoted missionary work.<sup>12</sup> The successor of Spener was August Francke, who had a strong influence on a young nobleman from Saxony, Count von Zinzendorf. In 1722, von Zinzendorf gave asylum on his estate to Christian David, a Catholic from Moravia. A number of old Moravians, along with people from other denominations, sought shelter

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Genadendal, 1984); J. de Boer and E.M. Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum* (The Moravian Church in South Africa, Genadendal, 1987); K.T. August, “The Quest for Being Public Church: A Study of the South African Moravian Church in Historical and Contemporary Perspective”, PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2003.

5. August, “The Quest for Being Public Church”.

6. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*.

7. J.E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (Moravian Publication Office, London, 1909), p 46.

8. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*, pp 71–72; De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 2.

9. J. Holmes, *History of the Protestant Church of the Brethren* (Unitas Fratrum, London, 1825), p 50.

10. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*, pp 150–169; Holmes, *History of the Protestant Church of the Brethren*, pp 100 and 125; J.F. Hamilton and K.G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church* (Moravian Church in America, Winston-Salem, 1967), p 13; August, “The Quest for Being Public Church”, p 60.

11. August, “The Quest for Being Public Church”, p 60; De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 2.

12. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 3.

there. The new settlement was called Herrnhut, meaning protection of the Lord. In 1727 these refugees founded the renewed Moravian Church.<sup>13</sup>

The Moravians were very strongly missionary focused and they were seen as the “first Protestant Church in Christendom to undertake the conversion of the heathen”.<sup>14</sup> Kuiper affirms this by stating: “To the Moravians belongs everlastingly the honour of being the first Protestant body to take seriously the Great Commission.”<sup>15</sup> It is therefore understandable that when they heard of the plight of the Khoi-Khoi from two young theologians from Halle who had touched at the Cape on their way to southern India as missionaries, they called the faithful in Europe to action. This led to Georg Schmidt being sent to the Cape in 1737 to start his missionary work among the Khoi people. He began in Zoetmelksvlei, in the valley of the Zondereind River.<sup>16</sup>

However, at the time the Moravians were accused in Holland of being a “mystical society spreading dangerous opinions detrimental to the pure doctrine under cover of evangelical simplicity”,<sup>17</sup> and this impacted negatively on their work in the Dutch colonies. At the same time, opposition to Schmidt’s endeavours increased, both from the official church and from the neighbouring farmers in the Cape who were embittered by the governor’s refusal to allow them to trade cattle with the Khoi-Khoi.<sup>18</sup> Learning of Schmidt’s success with the teaching of the Khoi-Khoi, their ridicule turned into enmity.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, “there were political and economic reasons to feel threatened by the Khoi-Khoi’s access to Christianity”. For example, “masters were afraid that baptizing their slaves would render them inalienable”, and that “such attitudes [would be] ... transferred to the Khoi-Khoi”.<sup>20</sup> The opposition came to a head when Schmidt baptised five of the Khoi converts, leading to increased antagonism from the official Dutch Reformed Church, since he was not an ordained minister and in their eyes, not permitted to baptise. In 1744 Schmidt left the Cape, leaving behind a twenty-six-member congregation.<sup>21</sup> It was only in 1792 that the tide against the Moravians turned from prejudice to appreciation.<sup>22</sup>

In Holland a society for the support of the Moravian missions was formed – in England William Carey founded the Baptist Missionary Society, the first Protestant body to join the Moravians and in Herrnhut, Spangenberg died after making a last appeal to the Brethren not to forget Africa.<sup>23</sup>

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13. Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, p 60.

14. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*, pp 234–254.

15. B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975), p 278.

16. H.C. Bredekamp and J.L. Hattingh, *Das Tagebuch und die Briefe von Georg Schmidt (1734–1744)* (Wes-Kaaplandse Instituut vir Historiese Navorsing, Bellville, 1981), pp 37–63.

17. W. Lütjeharms, *Het Philadelphisch-Oecumenisch Streven der Herrnhuters in de Nederlanden in de Achttiende Eeuw* (Unitas Fratrum, Zeist, 1935), p 226.

18. E.A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, re-issue of the third edition, (Longmans, London, 1959), pp 93–94.

19. August, “The Quest for Being Public Church”, p 62.

20. E. Elbourne, “Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity”, in H. Bredekamp and R.T. Ross (eds), *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995), p 69.

21. Krüger, “The Pear Tree Blossoms”, p 42.

22. Lütjeharms, *Het Philadelphisch-Oecumenisch Streven der Herrnhuters in de Nederlanden in de Achttiende Eeuw*, pp 113–116.

23. Krüger, “The Pear Tree Blossoms”, p 49.

Against this more positive backdrop, it was decided to re-start the work at the Cape. Three missionaries were sent there in 1792, almost fifty years after Schmidt had left, and the work among the Khoi-Khoi in Baviaanskloof began once more.<sup>24</sup> Although opposition from the official Cape church and the farmers continued, mission work progressed and when Britain annexed the Cape in 1795, relations with the missionaries became semi-cordial when they became aware of the advantages of a mission station in their vicinity – it had become a reservoir of labour and military service.<sup>25</sup> The mission station was granted permission to extend the buildings and activities at Baviaanskloof,<sup>26</sup> and it developed into a “flourishing settlement”, a description of it, amongst others, from a visit in 1798 by Lady Anne Barnard, the wife of the colonial secretary.<sup>27</sup>

After the second (and final) occupation of the Cape by Britain in 1806, possibilities for expansion of the missionary work became easier, although the Moravians were slow in taking up some of these opportunities, concentrating their efforts on Baviaanskloof, which became known as Genadendal in 1803. It was only in 1808 that the next Moravian station was founded at Groenekloof, later renamed Mamre. Elim followed in 1824; Goedverwacht in 1846; Wittewater in 1859; Pella in 1869; and Moravian Hill in 1884, which was the first urban Moravian congregation.<sup>28</sup> During this period a number of mission stations were also established in other parts of South Africa, but those will not be discussed in this paper because our focus here is on the Western Cape.<sup>29</sup> In the sections which now follow, the mission stations in the Western Cape and the bells found at each station will be discussed in more detail.

During the period under discussion there were other missionary societies and churches that began their missionary work in South Africa, such as the Rhenish Missionary Society;<sup>30</sup> the London Missionary Society;<sup>31</sup> and the Berlin Missionary Society.<sup>32</sup> The work by Du Plessis is useful in this regard for further reference.<sup>33</sup>

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24. H.C. Bredekamp and H.E.F. Plüddemann (eds), *The Genadendal Diaries, Vol. 2* (University of the Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, Bellville, 1999).
  25. R. Viljoen, “Moravian Missionaries, Khoisan Labour and the Overberg Colonists at the end of the VOC Era, 1792”, in Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, pp 59 and 60.
  26. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal: De Eerste Zending Statie in Zuid-Afrika van 1737 tot 1806* (Van de Sandt, De Villiers & Co., Cape Town, 1893), pp 26–30.
  27. H.C. Bredekamp and H.E.F. Plüddemann (eds), *The Genadendal Diaries Vol. 1* (University of the Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, Bellville, 1992).
  28. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 3; J.M. Katzenellenbogen, “Mamre: History and Development”, *South African Medical Journal*, 74, 1998, p 365; J.J. Ulster, *Daar is Maar Een Elim* (Elim Sendingstasie, 1974); K.T. August, *Moravian Hill: Ons Katedraal in die Middestad*, (Genadendal Printers, Cape Town, 1980).
  29. For further information on Moravian mission stations elsewhere in South Africa see De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*.
  30. E. Strassberger, *The Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa, 1830–1950* (C Struik, Cape Town, 1969).
  31. J. de Gruchy, *The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa, 1799–1999* (Ohio University Press, Athens: OH, 2000).
  32. H. Lehmann, *150 Jahre Berliner Mission* (Verlag der Evangelisch-Luthers Mission, Erlangen, 1974).
  33. J. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* (Longman, Green & Co., London, 1911). A 1965 facsimile copy is also available, printed by C Struik, Cape Town.

## Historic meaning and use of bells

Bells have been an integral part of man's religious and civic life over many centuries. Roorbach writes in emotional vein:

Bells have rung in historical events, enriched literature, coloured romances, inspired architecture, struck terror to the superstitious, or given consolation. They have rejoiced with the rejoicing, mourned with the grieving, chanted with the prayers of all nations ... They have tinkled from the ankles of pagan dancing girls, and from the sacrificial robes of Levitical high priests. They have sorrowfully mourned "The King is dead!" then loyally shouted "Long live the King!"<sup>34</sup>

In the Old Testament of the Bible, bells are mentioned a number of times in the life of the Hebrews. For example, in the book of Exodus in connection with the high priest's garments,<sup>35</sup> and in Zechariah it refers to the custom of having bells on horses.<sup>36</sup> We also know that in ancient Greek and Roman cultures, bells were used in many ways and for many purposes. In Coleman there is a drawing of a Greek bell of the fourth century B.C. held at the British Museum.<sup>37</sup> He also mentions that bells have been found inside numerous Greek tombs, because of their supposed power to protect against evil spirits; and that Emperor Augustus had a bell hung in front of the temple of Jupiter.<sup>38</sup> Bells were also used to inform residents of the time of day: for example, in Rome the bathing hours were announced by a bell.<sup>39</sup> Lomax mentions instances of the use of bells in everyday life: "The Roman infant played with bells as his toy, and the same sound preceded him to the funeral pile".<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Pease tells us that bells were used in warfare by the Greeks and Romans.<sup>41</sup>

Bells were introduced into the Christian church by Bishop Paulinus of Nola in Italy, in about the year 400. At that time there was a bell ringer going about the streets announcing important events. However, Paulinus decided to have a large bell fastened at a high point so that all the people might hear it.<sup>42</sup> This naturally led to bell towers as a high platform on which to hang the bell. The use of bells in churches was sanctioned by Pope Sabinianus in 604; he had the bells rung at times for prayer.<sup>43</sup> Similar to pre-Christian times, bells were also used to ward off evil spirits.<sup>44</sup> The position of a bell high up in a bell tower gave people in the surrounding area a feeling of safety – providing protection to the parish from evil influences in the air, especially lightning. Many bells from the Middle Ages had the Latin inscription *Frango fulgura*, meaning: "I break the lightning".<sup>45</sup>

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34. E. Roorbach, "Bells of History and Romance", *The Craftsman*, December 1912.
  35. Exodus 28: 33, "Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them". Holy Bible, New International Version, 1984.
  36. Zechariah 14:20, "On that day Holy to the Lord will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar". Holy Bible, New International Version, 1984.
  37. S.N. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses* (Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, 1928), p 27. Reprinted in 1971 by Greenwood Press, Westport: Conn.
  38. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 26.
  39. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 28.
  40. B. Lomax, *Bells and Bell Ringers* (H.J. Infield, London, 1879, also reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, Montana, 2010).
  41. A.S. Pease, "Notes on the Uses of Bells among the Greeks and Romans", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 1904.
  42. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 35.
  43. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 35.
  44. J. Thompkins, "Bells and Religion", *The Bell Tower*, 53, 2, March/April 1995.
  45. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 90.

Bells were also used for secular purposes: for time keeping; to warn of fire, attacks, military victories, etc. An example of this is the curfew bell. The ringing of the bell for this purpose was instituted in the ninth century by Alfred the Great in Oxford, when he ordered the inhabitants to put out their fires by eight o'clock as a safety precaution. To comply with this instruction but avoid having to light their fires from scratch in the mornings, they devised a metal cap to cover the fire without extinguishing it by keeping out most of the oxygen. This custom was enforced during the time of William the Conqueror throughout England. The metal cap was called a *couvre-feu* in French, which came to be pronounced in English as "curfew".<sup>46</sup>

In the Catholic tradition several liturgical practices were developed making use of bells. In particular, a rite was developed for the solemn blessing or baptism of a bell, in which it was "dressed and decorated, anointed, incensed, named and blessed".<sup>47</sup> In some instances, indulgences were granted at the consecration of a bell. For example: "40 days' indulgences to all who would say 5 Paternosters and 5 Aves at the sound of the great bell and 5 Aves at the sound of the small bell".<sup>48</sup>

Gradually the number of bells within a tower increased, with different bells having different purposes, which meant that bells gained individuality. One bell was used to call people to services; another to warn against imminent danger; another to inform the people in the vicinity when a parishioner had died. Because of these functions, bells in churches were cast with appropriate inscriptions, indicating the uses to which they were put. At their blessing, bells often received the name of a saint who was worshipped for his or her special powers. In this way the powers of the saint were then "transferred" to the bell, giving it miraculous power.<sup>49</sup> Popular examples are Our Lady, St Peter, St Paul and other apostles. The noon bell for example that is still popular in many Western churches often carries the name of Our Lady and is called the Angelus bell.<sup>50</sup> Because of the elevated value attached to bells, they were often made with very beautiful ornamentation apart from the inscription, in many cases also carrying the name of the bell maker (also called a founder, indicating that a bell was produced at a foundry). Bells became a symbol of pride to their makers and their owners. In the seventeenth century it became common that civilians agreed to become "godfathers" for certain bells. For example, in the Notre Dame church in Paris, Louis XIV was godfather to the 13-ton Emmanuel Bell.<sup>51</sup>

In the Moravian tradition, some of these practices were retained; others took on a different "undertone". In the spirit of the Reformation, bells were not baptised since material objects were not meant to acquire spiritual power. This is in line with the attitude after the Reformation towards images and saints. Texts on bells could include the name of the maker and/or date but had another function: to provide inspiration. This will be noted in the discussion of the bells at Genadendal, Mamre, Wittewater and Goedverwacht. The fact that texts (in Dutch) came from

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46. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 103.

47. R.J. Siegel, "A Survey of the History of Campanology in the Western Christian Cultural Tradition", *Sacred Music*, 122, 4, 1995, p 13.

48. H.B. Walters, *The Church Bells of England* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1912).

49. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 74.

50. Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 99.

51. For more information on the customs attached to bells, see H. Thurston, "Bells", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1907).

the Statenbijbel (State Bible) indicates that when bells were commissioned, the missionaries wanted the bells to provide specific inspiration to the congregation.

On Moravian mission stations, church bells were also used for many other purposes:

- Bells announce worship services. The bells are rung twice, the first ring a quarter of an hour before the service, the second on the hour when the service commences.
- In earlier years, at the mission stations the ringing of the bell called-up the residents for community work. For example, August mentioned that during his childhood in the 1950s and 1960s, voluntary work on the mission stations was done before the winter to clear the irrigation ditches. When the bell rang on a Monday morning, residents on the station had to meet at the church with their spades, picks and other tools to carry out this work under the guidance of the town leaders.<sup>52</sup> This example is a typical illustration of the close ties between the use of bells and the activities in the town.
- In some Moravian churches there is a tradition to make bell-ringing a substantial part of the Crucifixion service on Good Friday. At 3:00 pm while worshippers pray and meditate, the church bell is rung 33 times, each peal indicating a year in the life of Jesus.<sup>53</sup>
- When a couple is married in a Moravian church, a family member is entitled to ring the church bells at the beginning and/or the end of the wedding ceremony.<sup>54</sup>
- The tolling of the church bell announces that someone in the congregation has passed away, and at the same time it reminds the living that they too must leave this earth one day. At one time people believed that devils troubled a dying person and lay in wait to afflict the soul when it escaped from the body. It was then customary to ring the passing-bell to scare off the devils.<sup>55</sup> The passing-bell stopped ringing after the death, but the tolling continued.<sup>56</sup>
- An impressive use of bells is at the Moravian early-morning service on Easter. People wait in the darkness until the bell starts ringing; a silhouetted figure then emerges from the dark and announces: "The Lord is risen."<sup>57</sup>

## Baviaanskloof, Genadendal history

The missionary Schmidt, who arrived in 1737, established the mission station in Baviaanskloof in 1738 and immediately began his spiritual work among the local inhabitants.<sup>58</sup> However, as noted above, in 1742 when he baptised his first converts, there was much dissatisfaction among the Cape Dutch Reformed clergy since he was not ordained as a minister. This eventually led to his return to Europe

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52. K.T. August, Personal communication, 2014.

53. For more information on this, see, <http://rhmc.org/customs-and-traditions>

54. <http://www.heimtal.com/weddings.html>

55. J. Camp, *Discovering Bells and Bellringing*, Third Edition (Shire Publications Ltd, Buckinghamshire, 1988); Siegel, *A Survey of the History of Campanology in the Western Christian Cultural Tradition*, p 15; Coleman, *Bells: Their History, Legends, Making and Uses*, p 101.

56. H.E. Stocker, *Moravian Customs and Other Matters of Interest* (PA Times Publishing Co., Bethlehem, 1918).

57. <http://rhmc.org/customs-and-traditions>

58. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 4.

in 1744. The mission work was then discontinued until 1793 when it was restarted with the arrival from Europe of three Moravian missionaries, Hendrik Marsveld, Daniel Schwinn and Christian Kühnel. Despite the strained relations the missionaries had with the Cape authorities, the farmers and the official Dutch Reformed Church, who objected to the intrusion of “outside” bodies,<sup>59</sup> the work and the number of residents on the mission station increased and in 1798 there were 800 people resident in Baviaanskloof.<sup>60</sup> Of course, as the station grew, the need for a church building became more acute. Originally a chapel was built and this was consecrated in 1796.<sup>61</sup> Soon afterwards, plans were made for a new building and on 8 January 1800 the first church building was consecrated.<sup>62</sup> In 1803, at the suggestion of Governor Jansen and approved by him as one of his last official duties, the name of the mission station was changed to Genadendal, as it is still known today.<sup>63</sup>

Genadendal is a well-known tourist attraction. Tourism is centred around the church square which was declared a national monument in 1980, although the bell tower was given this status in 1957.<sup>64</sup> In 1999 the National Heritage Resources Act, which regulates the award of national and provincial heritage status, was passed. In terms of this act, both the church square and the bell tower are now Provincial Heritage Sites.<sup>65</sup>

The name Genadendal became particularly well known, even a household name after the late President Nelson Mandela named his official Cape Town residence “Genadendal”.<sup>66</sup>

### Genadendal bells

Genadendal has three bells of historical interest, one in a bell tower on the church square and two others in the tower of the Moravian Church.

The first “bell” used at the mission station was a three-sided, yellow-copper one, made by Kühnel, one of the missionaries. Although it did not have a pleasant sound, it did serve as a church bell.<sup>67</sup> Christian friends from the Cape found it unbearable that the missionaries were using such a bell. They made funds available and a bell was bought in 1793.<sup>68</sup> This is the bell currently hanging in the bell tower on the square. It is a simple bell which gives us no indication about its origin. Moreover, there is a 13 cm crack on the one side of the bell; this seriously affects the quality of its sound. The bell tower and bell are shown in Figure 1.

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59. Krüger, “The Pear Tree Blossoms”, p 63.

60. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 30.

61. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 27.

62. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 34.

63. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 42.

64. I.H.T. Balie, *Die Geskiedenis van Genadendal 1738–1985* (Perskor, Midrand, 1988), p 226.

65. For further information, see the website of the managing agency, the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) at [www.sahra.org.za](http://www.sahra.org.za)

66. For further information on Genadendal and its history, see for example, I.H.T. Balie, “’n Kultuurhistoriese Beeld van Kaapse Morawiese Sendingstasies, 1808–1919”, PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1992; I.H.T. Balie, “Die 2 ½ Eeue van Genadendal: ’n Kultuurhistoriese Ondersoek”, MA dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 1986; *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*; Krüger, “The Pear Tree Blossoms”; J-M. Rabe, “Genadendal Meubels as Materiële Manifestasie van die Morawiese Piëtisme”, MA dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2007.

67. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 18.

68. *Geschied-Verhaal van Genadendal*, p 20.





**Figure 1:** The bell tower and bell. The commemorative plaque on the tower tells us that the bell was placed in position in 1798 after special permission was obtained from the authorities of the Cape (Photo: Jef Teugels).



**Figure 2:** The plaque also mentions that the church was completed in 1800. Later changes took place as is illustrated on the pillar next to the steps on the right-hand side of the church (Photo: Jef Teugels).

In the tower of the Moravian Church hang two beautifully cast bells from the German foundry Friedrich Gruhl. Both carry statements in Dutch. The canons of the bells are embellished with four carefully carved angel heads, almost as if they are the trade mark of the founders. The foundry of Friedrich Gruhl was situated in Kleinwelka in Bautzen in the former East Germany.



**Figure 3:** The larger Gruhl bell with the reference to the founder (Photo: Jef Teugels). Note the artistic angel heads on the canons.

The larger of the two bells dates from 1870 and has a diameter of about 60 cm. It is decorated as follows: Below a moulding wire, on the front, there is a decorative band with flower motifs. Below that there is another moulding wire and then the inscription:

KOMT WANT ALLE DINGEN ZIJN NU GEREED!  
LUCAS 14.V.17  
KOMT, GIJ ALLEN! KOMT TOT HEM  
ZONDAARS! KOMT, WAT ZOU U HIND'REN?  
JEZUS ROEPT U, HOORT ZIJN STEM.  
HIJ MAAKT ZONDAARS TOT GODS KIND'REN  
VRIJ MOOGT GIJ TOT JEZUS GAAN:  
JEZUS NEEMT DE ZONDAARS AAN.

(Come for all things are now ready! Luke 14:17  
Come, ye sinners, one and all  
Come, accept His invitation,  
Come, obey His gracious call,  
Come and take His free salvation!  
Firmly in these words believe:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.)

Note that the second part of the inscription is a song. The lyrics were written by Erdmann Neumeister in 1718 in German. The English translation can be found on the internet.<sup>69</sup>

Below the inscription is another moulding wire and a decorative band with circles. These are then followed by another moulding wire and a decorative band around the mouth of the bell. On the rear there are the following words:

GENADENDAL  
GEGOSSEN VON FR. GRUHL IN KLEINWELKA BEI BAUTZEN  
1870

69. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/35553/rec6>



**Figure 4:** The smaller bell and its crown of angels (Photo: Jef Teugels).

The smaller bell dates from 1893 and has a diameter of about 40 cm. On the front of the bell, below a moulding wire, there is a first decorative band with flower motifs. Below that is another moulding wire and then the inscription:

KOMT, LAAT ONS AANBIDDEN  
EN NEDERBUKKEN  
LAAT ONS KNIELLEN VOOR DEN HEER  
DIE ONS GEMAAKT HEEFT  
PSALM 95, 6

(Come, let us bow down  
In worship  
Let us kneel before the Lord  
Our maker  
Psalm 95, 6)

After this inscription, there is again a moulding wire followed by a decorative band with circles. A last moulding wire and another decorative band are found on the nose of the bell. On the rear we again find the words:

GENADENDAL  
GEGOSSEN VON FR. GRUHL IN KLEINWELKA BEI BAUTZEN  
1893

It is worthwhile to include some information on the foundry where the bells were made. We have made contact with Helmfried Klotke<sup>70</sup> in Kleinwelka. On our behalf he has unearthed some information on the history of the Gruhl Foundry. The foundry was a family business that ran from 1803 until 1896 and made between 1 700 and 2 000 church bells. Information on these bells was destroyed

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70. H. Klotke, Personal communication, 2014.

by a rival founder in 1896. At the moment, information on the fate of some 700 bells has been retrieved. Most of the Gruhl bells were destroyed during the two World Wars. Fortunately, the South African bells make an important exception to this.

Even although the dates on the Genadendal bells are 1870 and 1893 this does not necessarily mean that Friedrich Gruhl made these bells. Friedrich ran the business from 1803 until 1852 when his son Ernst Friedrich took over until 1864. When Ernst Friedrich died, his wife married the foundry head, Theodor Werner, who guided the firm until 1882 and again from 1886 to 1896. In the interim, an uncle, Ernst Gruhl, took care of the business. Because of the family character of the business, all the bell makers in the foundry used the “Friedrich Gruhl” label. From the above it is logical that both bells in Genadendal were cast by Theodor Werner, as suggested by Helmfried Klotke.<sup>71</sup>

The links between Gruhl and South Africa are strong and the Gruhl name is a familiar one in the Moravian Church. The Moravian mission stations at Mamre (see below) and Enon (in the current Eastern Cape Province) each have a Gruhl bell.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cape Town has two Gruhl bells, dating from 1887. The Dutch Reformed Church Moedergemeente in Stellenbosch initially had three Gruhl bells, dating as far back as 1864. However, in 1986 these bells were replaced by a new set of bells and two of the three original Gruhl bells are now hanging in a bell tower on a farm in Riviersonderend.<sup>73</sup> The fate of the third of these bells is unknown.

### **Groenekloof, Mamre history**

Mamre was the second Moravian mission station in South Africa. It was originally named Groenekloof, the name of the farm on which it was situated. This land was previously controlled by the Khoi-Khoi farmer Cochoquas, but became a cattle post belonging to the Vereenighde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), the Dutch East India Company, in 1697.

In 1806 the Cape became a British colony and Earl Caledon was appointed as the governor. He had been instructed by the British government to promote the work of the Moravians and offered Groenekloof to the Moravians to establish a mission station. This offer was accepted and on Sunday, 27 March 1808, the Gospel was preached for the first time – under a poplar tree – by the two missionaries, J.P. Kohrhammer and J.H. Schmitt.<sup>74</sup> By the end of 1808 the mission community already numbered 101 souls.<sup>75</sup> In 1816 the mission station had grown to about 300 inhabitants and at that stage, permission was granted to build a church, which was consecrated two years later, in 1818.<sup>76</sup> The original character of the building was changed after the northern gable collapsed in 1922.

When the slaves were freed in 1838, Groenekloof experienced an influx of residents who were emancipated slaves. They integrated well into the community, having attended services there in the past. Between the years 1837 and 1840,

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71. H. Klotke, Personal communication, 2014.

72. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/35553/rec6>

73. De Wet, Teugels and Van Deventer, *Inventory of Bells in the Western Cape*.

74. *Diary of Groenekloof / Mamre, Vol 1, 1808–1825*, 28 March 1808.

75. Katzenellenbogen, “Mamre: History and Development”, pp 364–367.

76. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 41.

Groenekloof grew from 725 to 1 096 inhabitants.<sup>77</sup>

In subsequent years, the mission station experienced a time of development as well as growth in its population. In 1854 it was decided to change its name to Mamre, referring to Mamre in the Bible, in the book of Genesis, where reference is made to Abraham building an altar to the Lord.<sup>78</sup>

Over the years Mamre has become an established town, comprising far more than the original mission station. However, the mission station per se remains the property of the Moravian Church and continues to serve the spiritual needs of the community. The complex around the church building was declared a National Monument in 1967 and is a well-known tourist attraction. Note, however, that under the new legislation regulating national heritage sites, Mamre is now a Provincial Heritage Site. See the discussion on the new act in the section on Genadendal.

### **Mamre church bell**

A first bell was donated to the mission by Governor Caledon. In a sketch of the centre of Groenekloof in the publication by La Trobe (1818) a bell tower is clearly visible, although it is impossible to distinguish whether a bell hangs in it.<sup>79</sup> This bell most probably hung in the tower shown in the drawing or perhaps in a separate wooden bell tower closer to the church. Also, it seems to belong to the homestead rather than to the church. Balie mentions that in 1872, when a new bell arrived, the old wooden bell tower was taken down and a new belfry built against the northern wall of the church in which the bell was hung.<sup>80</sup> With the acquisition of the new bell, the old bell was donated to Pella.<sup>81</sup>

The current bell that has been installed high up on the northern wall of the church is the bell hung in 1872, originally in the new bell tower. In later years it was moved from the tower to the present position so that its ringing could be heard by residents who lived further away.<sup>82</sup>

The current bell was made specifically for the church and is a typical Gruhl bell, with the Gruhl trademark of four angels on the canon. The bell maker (founder) is Theodor Werner, the same manufacturer as of the two Genadendal church bells. The bell weighs 250 kg, has a diameter of 58 cm and a height of 45 cm.<sup>83</sup> The religious text on the bell is in Dutch from the Statenbijbel, and reads as follows:

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77. R. Ross and R. Viljoen, "The 1849 Census of Cape Missions", *South African Historical Journal*, 61, 2009, p 392.
  78. Katzenellenbogen, "Mamre: History and Development", p 366.
  79. C.I. La Trobe, *Journal of a Visit to South Africa* (Greenwood Press, London, 1818, new edition, 1969).
  80. Balie, "*'n Kultuurhistoriese Beeld van Kaapse Morawiese Sendingstasies, 1808–1919*", p 102.
  81. Balie, "*'n Kultuurhistoriese Beeld van Kaapse Morawiese Sendingstasies, 1808–1919*", Photo Album, Pictures 8 and 9, Part K.
  82. Balie, "*'n Kultuurhistoriese Beeld van Kaapse Morawiese Sendingstasies, 1808–1919*", Photo Album, Part E.
  83. Reverend Ruyters, the current minister of the Mamre Moravian Congregation, Personal communication, 2014.

MAMRE 1872  
GEGOSSEN VON FRIEDRICH GRUEHL IN KLEINWELKA

KOMT, WANT ALLE DINGE ZYN NU GEREED LUKAS 14 v 17  
GAAT IN TOT ZYNE POORTEN MET LOF,  
IN ZYNE VOORHOVEN MET LOFZANG  
LOOFT HEM PRYST ZYNEN NAAM PSALM 100 v 4

(Come, for all things are now ready Luke 14 v 17  
Enter His gates with thanksgiving  
And His courts with praise  
Give thanks to Him and praise His name  
Psalm 100 v 4)



**Figure 5:** Position of the Gruhl bell in its construction on the northern wall of the church (Photo: Jef Teugels).

### Elim history

Despite their earlier animosity towards the missionaries, farmers from the Strandveld, an area in the south-east of the Cape, began to realise the advantages of having a mission station in their midst. In 1797 they even expressed the wish that “one of the brethren should come to dwell among them”.<sup>84</sup> However, it took a full 25 years before this was eventually realised when the farm Vogelstruyskraal, near Cape Agulhas, came onto the market at a reasonable price. Inspecting the property, it was found to be very suitable for a mission station, given the existing buildings on the farm as well as the availability of water, fertile soil and sympathetic farmers in the vicinity. On 12 May 1824 it became the property of the Moravians, being the first property that they owned in South Africa.<sup>85</sup> A request was made for a name change, which was duly granted. On 26

84. *Diary of Baviaanskloof / Genadendal, 1792–1880, Vol. 3, pp 6 and 7.*

85. L. van der Hoven, “Elim: A Cultural Study of a Moravian Mission Station at the Southern Extreme of Africa”, MA dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2001, p 96. (Compact

April 1825, Elim became its official name; it refers to the oasis in the desert where the Israelites rested en route to the Promised Land (Exodus 15:27).<sup>86</sup>

### Elim church bell

Attached to the church building is a horseshoe construction decorated with an urn at the apex; the bell hangs here. Although the bell is of historic value, it has little decoration. The only marking is found between the two top pairs of moulding wires and reads: 1833. This bell is not the original one. The first meeting at Elim between the minister, the Rev. Bonatz and the residents, took place on 12 May 1825. Of this meeting, the minister of Genadendal, Rev. Halbeck, writes in one of his letters:

Brother Bonatz hopes that some of the houses will be finished by the 12th of May, when he proposes to have a solemn meeting with the inhabitants, to which I am invited ... A merchant of Cape Town has made a present of a fine bell for Elim, which we wish to have hung when the houses are finished.<sup>87</sup>

The present curator of the Elim Museum says this is the bell that still hangs at the entrance to the parsonage.<sup>88</sup> The current bell, dated 1833, must be the second bell. Its origin is unknown, but it was probably acquired for the inauguration of the first church building in 1835. As an aside, in the gable wall of the church, there is a 250-year-old clock that is still in use. It is accompanied by two half-spherical shells that serve as bells. In official documents it has been claimed (erroneously) that the church bell dates from 1764; was originally placed in Ochránov (Herrnhut), the centre of the Moravian Church and was acquired by Elim in 1914. However, this clearly refers to the clock and not to the bell. According to Van der Hoven, the clock was made by the council clock-builder, Prasse, in Herrnhut's neighbouring city of Zittau and was donated to Elim by the Herrnhut community in 1914.<sup>89</sup>



**Figure 6:** The horseshoe-shaped bell construction; the current bell; and its predecessor (Photo: Jef Teugels).

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storage, 968.73 VAND); Ulster, *Daar is Maar Een Elim, 1824–1974*, p 9.

86. Elim Documents, 26 April, 1825.

87. *Diary of Elim, 1824–1874, Vol 1*, pp 15, 23, 24; *Moravian Periodical Accounts*, Extracts of Letters from Brother Hans Peter Halbeck, pp 382 and 383.

88. A. Cloete, Personal communication, 2014.

89. Van der Hoven, "Elim: A Cultural Study", p 142.

### Goedverwacht history

The Goedverwacht mission station was founded on the farm Burgershoek, close to the town of Piketberg. As early as 1839, one of the people living on Burgershoek, David Noag, invited the missionaries from Mamre to hold a church service in his home on the farm. It was only in 1845, however, that Rev. L. Teutsch from Genadendal was sent to Burgershoek where he preached in one of the houses and recommended that the missionaries from Mamre should visit them from time to time. In 1846, a student from the Genadendal training school, Jozef Hardenberg, became available for an appointment and it was decided to send him to Goedverwacht (as it was then called) as a teacher.<sup>90</sup> The people of Goedverwacht erected a building to serve as a church and school and in 1846 Hardenberg began to teach about 50 children.<sup>91</sup> In 1889, when the farm came onto the market, it was bought by the Moravian Church. Subsequently a church was built there and in 1896 it was eventually consecrated.

### Goedverwacht church bell

The bell sits in a stone bell-tower and is an example of quality craftsmanship.



**Figure 7:** Goedverwacht belfry and bell (Photo: Jef Teugels).

At the top of the Goedverwacht bell there is a beautiful band decorated with grapes and vine leaves, highly appropriate for the region where the church has been erected. On the front of the bell there is an oval shaped figure which provides information on the bell maker.

90. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 65.

91. Krüger, "The Pear Tree Blossoms", p 219.





**Figure 8.** Goedverwacht bell with inscriptions (Photo: Jef Teugels).

The information comprises 5 lines, one above the other. The top and bottom lines are curved to fit into the oval shape of the bell. The text is indistinct, but reads as follows:

FRANZ SCHILLING  
i.Firm.  
CARL FRIEDR.ULRICH  
gossinich  
in APOLDA.i.Thur.-ALLENSTEIN

Below this is the casting date: 1896

On the reverse side of the bell there is a short phrase in Dutch:

EERE ZIJ GOD IN DE HOOGSTE  
HEMELEN

(Glory to God in the highest)



**Figure 9:** Decoration on the Goedverwacht bell (Photo: Jef Teugels).

During the period from 1722 to 1988 there was a bell foundry in the city of Apolda in Thuringen, Germany. Bells from this foundry were sent throughout the world and it is estimated that the total production must have been in the order of about 20 000 pieces. There still is a bell museum in Apolda that gives the history

of the foundry. The first founder was Johann Christoff Rose who was succeeded in 1750 by Johann Martin Rose. Then the family Ulrich (mentioned on the bell) took over in 1826. Carl Ulrich guided the firm from 1862 onwards and married the sister of Franz Friedrich August Schilling (1830–1926). Franz Schilling then took over and is therefore the manufacturer of the bell. More on the history of the foundry can be found in the recent book by Manfred Hofmann.<sup>92</sup>

### **Wittewater history**

Wittewater lies very close to Goedverwacht and the development of the two stations was closely linked. The farm Wittewater was bought in 1859 and the Rev. J. Stolz, its first missionary, moved into the old farm homestead soon afterwards. The first church services were held in this same house until a building, previously used as stables, could be enlarged to serve as a church. This building was inaugurated on 18 June 1865, and on 25 August 1867, a special service was held for the inauguration of the church bell.<sup>93</sup>

### **Wittewater church bell**

This bell sits in a simple tower that fits in well with the architecture of the neighbouring church. The crown of the bell is decorated with a band that is repeated, although in a much broader fashion, on the bell itself, right below the shoulder.



**Figure 10:** Wittewater bell tower and bell (Photo: Jef Teugels).

92. M. Hofmann, *Die Apoldaer Glockengiesserei, Alte und neue Geheimnisse* (Wartburg Verlag, Weimar, 2014).

93. Balie, “’n Kultuurhistoriese Beeld van Kaapse Morawiese Sendingstasies, 1808–1919”, pp 108, 109, 123.



**Figure 11:** Wittewater bell with decoration and inscriptions (Photo: Jef Teugels).

The sound bow and lip of the bell are also carefully decorated. Above this decoration there is the following inscription:

GEGOSSEN VON T.H.LEHMANN IN NEUWIED 1865

and on the other side, but in the middle of the bell is: PSALM 95

This bell is definitely exclusive. The bell maker was Theodor Lehmann who ran a foundry in Neuwied in the period from 1862 to 1879. Because of war casualties in Europe, the number of the bells he made that are still in existence, is very limited. As an illustration, in 1871 Lehmann manufactured three new bells for the Freedom Church in Remagen, Germany. They were made of bronze that was recycled from French canons that Germany captured after the French-German war in the nineteenth century. However, in 1917, two of the three bells were confiscated by the German military authorities and used to make canons again.<sup>94</sup>

### **Pella history**

Many of the emancipated slaves were unable to adapt to the strict discipline of Mamre and settled on the farm Katzenberg, close to Mamre. This farm belonged to Gottlieb Johannes a Khoi person who became its owner in 1860. He allowed these emancipated slaves to live on his farm and even built a church, which was also used as a school. The church was inaugurated on 24 October 1869, and was called the Johannes Chapel. The small community on Katzenberg grew and it became known as Mission Station Pella.<sup>95</sup> Pella became the main congregation of the Moravian Church. The farm Katzenberg was given to the mission in Mamre and in 1929 the grounds became the property of the church in Pella.<sup>96</sup> Note that Pella is often denoted as the Mission Station Pella at Katzenberg. This is to distinguish it from another mission station called Pella that belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, which is in the Northern Cape<sup>97</sup>. The Johannes Chapel remained in use until 1976, with many changes to it over the years. A new church was then built, which was inaugurated on 12 December 1976.

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94. For more information, see the article M. Röcke, *Friedenskirche Remagen: Unsere "kleine Kathedrale"*, at <http://www.evresi.de/plaintext/gemeinde/friedenskircheremagen/index.html>

95. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 69.

96. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 70.

97. De Boer and Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p 69.

### **Pella bell**

According to a local historian,<sup>98</sup> a bell for the Johannes Chapel was ordered from Germany. However, when it arrived, it was found to be cracked and sent back to the founder. The bell was never returned.

As mentioned above, the church in Mamre acquired a new bell in 1872 and their 1818 bell was sent to Pella. The bell has five sets of moulding wires, each set comprising two moulding wires, with the inscription of the date 1818 between the second and third sets. Apart from that, the bell has no decorative features. It has been painted a silver colour and is slightly mutilated with a chip missing on the edge.

The maker of the bell is not recorded or inscribed on the bell, but it was presented to Mamre by Lord Caledon, the British governor of the Cape. This leads to speculation that it is from a British foundry. Furthermore, it has similarities to other bells we have researched that originate from British foundries, strengthening this speculation. Further investigation of this will form part of our future research.



**Figure 12:** The 1818 bell and the belfry at Pella church (Photo: Tertius de Wet).

### **Moravian Hill history**

During the 1880s there was an economic downturn in the Cape due to a number of reasons, including a prolonged drought and epidemics.<sup>99</sup> This led to a large number of people from the mission stations moving into Cape Town to seek work. Once there, many of them lived in slums and crowded accommodation. A group of visiting missionaries realised that there was a pressing need for a missionary to

98. F. Pland-Booyesen, Personal communication, 2014.

99. Krüger and Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, p 16.

give them spiritual guidance. At that time, J.F.W. Kühn, a former superintendent of the Cape Mission, was sent to South Africa to commemorate the 150-year anniversary of the Moravian Mission and to ordain the first indigenous ministers there.<sup>100</sup> During his stay the plight of the church members in Cape Town was discussed and it was decided that one of the missionaries from Mamre, P.E. Hickel, should visit them in Cape Town from time to time to minister to them.

This Hickel did, but his reports to the Mission Board convinced them of the need for a full time minister and he received permission from them to move to Cape Town. Plans had to be made to acquire land and the building of a church. A suitable property was found that already had a two storey residence in good condition; furthermore, the plot was big enough to house a church as well. The property was sold at an auction and since only a few people turned up, Hickel was able to buy it for the very low price of £851. Kühn suggested that the new station be called Moravian Hill.<sup>101</sup> Hickel duly moved into the residence and the building of the church began. On 25 September 1886 the church was consecrated.

District Six, where the Moravian Hill congregation was housed, fell victim to the Group Areas Act when it was declared a so-called “white area” in 1960. Since then, residents of District Six have had to move to other parts of Cape Town and the members of the congregation were scattered over different parts of the city. The last members left in 1979. The church building was earmarked to be demolished, but fortunately this did not happen; Moravian Hill is still standing. According to August, the last minister of the congregation, the church is still being used for services and church functions. The Moravian Hill Committee is in the process of transferring the property back to the Moravian Church.<sup>102</sup>

### **Moravian Hill church bell**

It appears that the Moravian Hill church did not have a bell at all until as late as 1929. However, in the work by K.T. August (1980) it is written: “On Wednesday, 16 October 1929, we heard the ringing of the Moravian Hill church bell for the first time” (translated from the original Afrikaans).<sup>103</sup>

The current bell has the date 1936 engraved on it, which means that it must be a later bell. In 1936 the congregation celebrated its 50th anniversary and it seems reasonable to assume that the bell was acquired to coincide with that particular commemoration.<sup>104</sup>

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100. Krüger and Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, p 14.

101. Krüger and Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, p 21.

102. K.T. August, Personal communication, 2014.

103. August, *Moravian Hill: Ons Katedraal in die Middestad*, p 20.

104. August, *Moravian Hill: Ons Katedraal in die Middestad*, p 17.



**Figure 13:** Moravian Hill church on the slopes of Table Mountain (Photo: Anton Jordaan).

The bell hangs in a bell cote above the apex on the west end of the church with a backdrop against Table Mountain.

On the shoulder of the bell is a decorative band between two moulding wires. Below the lower moulding wire is the founding date of 1936 and below that, the inscription. The inscription is in the centre of the bell, contained within a coat of arms:

Petit & Gebr.  
Edelbrock  
(effigy of bell)  
Gescher I Westf

The lines at the top and at the bottom are curved to fit within the cloak. Gebr. stands for Gebrüder (Brothers). The foundry is located at Gescher in Germany. The “I” stands for “in” and “Westf” denotes Westfalen, a district in Germany.

Petit was one of three old European families of founders, all with a link to the area of Lorraine, a part of current France close to Germany. The other two families who own and run foundries are the Hemony and Jullien families. The first Petit, Jean Francois, started making bells in about 1690. The fourth heir had no children and adopted two nephews, Joseph and Wilhelm Edelbrock, who continued founding as Petit & Gebr. Edelbrock. In the eighth generation, the foundry was taken over by a friend, Werner Hüesker, who directed the foundry

until 1932. His second son, Hans Georg Hermann Maria Huesker, succeeded him in 1935 and hence can be considered as the manufacturer of the Moravian Hill church bell. He lived from 1914 until 1979 and thus became the ninth generation of founders in this company. Two more founders have succeeded him since then and the foundry is still active today.<sup>105</sup>



**Figure 14:** Moravian Hill church bell (Photo: Anton Jordaan).

## Conclusion

The work of missionary societies and missionaries has played an important role in South Africa's Christian history and heritage. A close study of their part in this development is an ongoing research theme. See for example the articles by August, Jeannerat, Kirkclady and Ross, the book edited by Bredekamp and Ross

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105 . For further information on the foundry and its history, see the web page of the company [www.petit-edelbrock-gescher.de](http://www.petit-edelbrock-gescher.de)

and the recent book by Hovland.<sup>106</sup> In these works the influence of missions is considered from many different points of view.

Within the development of history and heritage, the Moravian Church played a crucial and often pioneering role with their unique approach to mission work and mission station organisation. This has been well documented as shown in the references in this article. It is our opinion that in the research and debate on the “bigger issues” of historical and heritage value, some aspects of South Africa’s micro-history are often overlooked. One such aspect is the history of bells at the mission stations; their origin and founders; their role and meaning; and their respective journeys from Europe to South Africa. Our research has shown that bells played an important part in the life of the residents at mission station. Bells regulated time; they called the people to worship; and summoned them for civic duties. They were also used in times of mourning, as well as celebrating joyous events. Because bells are costly items, in many cases missions had to be satisfied with a bell that was not specifically cast for the station. In other instances, however, mission stations were able to acquire a bell that was specifically forged according to their specifications. In the latter case the bells usually have inscriptions, such as verses from the Bible that offered inspiration to the particular congregation. Another fascinating aspect of many of these bells is that due to their link with Moravian roots in Germany, they have been cast in German foundries that were renowned for their craftsmanship and artistic standards.

The number of articles that deal, even marginally, with bells in South Africa, is incredibly small. In a first attempt to remedy this unfortunate situation, we began with the Cape Town carillon,<sup>107</sup> the only playable carillon in Africa. We then turned to bells in the Western Cape, developing a comprehensive inventory which is in the process of being taken up as part of the Stellenbosch University digital collection, SUNDigital. Even confining our attention specifically to the Western Cape, we estimate that ultimately about 500 bells should be included, the majority of which have some historical value. This current paper has filtered out about a dozen bells that have their Moravian background as common feature. We intend to continue this kind of approach to other such systematic collections of bells, such as for example bells at mission stations of other church groups and/or missionary societies.

There are still some unanswered questions about the many bells we have studied thus far. Some of the founders and founding dates are unknown and might only be discovered by making careful statistical and historical analyses. For such identification use can often be made of statistical classification techniques that are analogous to those utilised to identify unknown authors of written and historic documents. More importantly, why and how a bell came from a foundry in distant Europe and is now in its current location often remains an open question, the answer to which would contribute to our historical insight.

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106. K.T. August, “Mission and Power in a Time of Social and Political Change: The Moravian Mission Field in South Africa between Adherence and Autonomy”, *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*, 44, 2003, pp 230–247; C. Jeannerat, A. Kirkclady and R. Ross, “Introduction: Christian Missions in Southern Africa”, *South African Historical Journal*, 61, 2009, pp 213–215; Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity in South African History*; I. Hovland, *Mission Station Christianity* (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2013).

107. De Wet, Teugels and Van Deventer, *The Cape Town Carillon: A Forgotten Heritage*.



It remains an intriguing challenge to learn the links between the different missionary churches and how the acquisition of bells played a role in this. For example the Gruhl foundry delivered bells to the Moravian churches in Genadendal, Enon and Mamre, but also to the Evangelical-Lutheran church in Cape Town. The same happened with the Schilling foundry whose bells can be found at Goedverwacht and at the Lutheran churches in Bellville and Stellenbosch. Unfortunately both foundries are now closed, making historical investigation even more complex.

Although we currently limit our research to the Western Cape, there are many bells in other parts of South Africa that have historic value. See for example the work of Lewis.<sup>108</sup> We look forward to the challenge of extending our inventory to other such regions, hopefully assisted by other researchers who share our fascination with bells, an oft-forgotten but intriguing facet of the heritage of our country.

### Abstract

The Moravian Church was the first denomination to begin with missionary work among the indigenous people in South Africa and today the church still has a very strong presence in the country. After opening their first mission at Genadendal in 1738, a number of further mission stations were established during the nineteenth century in the Western Cape. These missionary stations played an extremely important part in the lives of their residents, both spiritually and socially. In the Moravian Church, as in other churches, their church buildings and the bells accompanying them form an integral part of their heritage. Despite the research that has been carried out on the mission stations per se, no systematic research has been done on the bells at these stations. In this article we discuss these bells, when and where they came from, and who made them. Due to the historical value of these mission stations, we cannot consider the bells without some background discussion of the stations' history. A brief historical background is provided for each station before focusing on the bells at that station and who cast them. Finally, a number of areas for further research are touched upon.

**Keywords:** heritage; Cape Colony; church bells; bell makers; mission churches.

### Opsomming

Die Morawiese kerk was die eerste kerkgenootskap wat met sendingwerk onder die inheemse bevolking van Suid Afrika begin het en vandag het die kerk steeds 'n baie sterk teenwoordigheid in die land. Na die stigting van die eerste sendingstasie te Genadendal in 1738, is 'n aantal verdere sendingstasies gedurende die 19de eeu in die Wes Kaap gevestig. Hierdie sendingstasies het 'n uiters belangrike rol gespeel in die lewens van hul inwoners, op geestelike sowel as sosiale vlak. In die Morawiese Kerk, soos in ander kerke, vorm die kerkgeboue met hul klokke 'n integrale deel van hul erfenis. Ten spyte van vele navorsing wat oor sendingstasies gedoen is, is daar geen sistematiese navorsing oor die klokke op hierdie stasies uitgevoer nie. As gevolg van die historiese waarde van hierdie sendingstasies kan ons nie hul klokke bespreek sonder 'n agtergrond bespreking

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108. C.A. Lewis, "Bells in the Province of Southern Africa", *The Ringing World*, 17 November 2006, pp 1099–1100.

van die stasies se geskiedenis nie. Dit word vir elke stasie gedoen voordat op die klokke by die stasie gefokus word. Ten slotte word 'n aantal verdere navorsingsareas aangedui.

**Sleutelwoorde:** erfenis; Kaapkolonie; klokke; metaalgieters; sendingkerke.