



Genadendal January 2026 Visit - Feedback

Introduction

A visit under the umbrella of UPFSA was undertaken to Genadendal from 5-8 January 2026 with the following objectives:

- Sharing the 'Our Spiritual Heritage' vision
- Providing feedback of the Germany outreach 2023
- Promoting a Germany outreach 2026
- Concluding research on the 'Lena Story'

God provided wonderfully - the stay in Genadendal was coordinated by Ms Judith Balie, and included time with herself, with Mr. Samuel Baadjies of the Museum and Rev. Robert Edson of the local Moravian Church. Rev. George Larbi from Ghana, assigned to Genadendal for 3 years by the EMS, as well as church elder, Sister Olwyn Wessels, could be included in the discussions. Two evenings of participation in the Moravian week of New Year services led by Rev. Larbi, helped open doors. Rev. Edson held the same services in neighbouring Berea. Rev. Godfrey Cunningham, who has the greatest connection to Herrnhut and Germany, was unfortunately still on leave. He lived for 3 years in Germany.

On the way to Genadendal, I could spent precious time with Sister Angela Dunn. In Genadendal, I learned that she is known and loved there as daughter of past Bishop Ulster and headmaster of the neighbouring Berea school. Rev. Edson started as a teacher under him.

Village maintenance and restoration

The first impression was of the church tower leaning and being stabilized and the entrance area being cordoned off. A number of factors, including heavy bus traffic and lack of rain water management, are putting the 150 + year old church in jeopardy. Consultants found that the original church was built without proper foundations. The key restoration effort at present is to inject concrete under the building and provide gutters for the roof. In the mean time church services are held in the Education Centre some ½ km away. I learned that negotiations for assistance are underway with the Rupert Foundation.

The Pilgrimage of Grace

The historical reconciliation (vergifnis) event between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Moravian Church in 2022 is remembered by everybody in Genadendal. A piece of sad news – Rev. Martin Abrahams, President of the Moravian Church, passed away in 2025. Below, a few follow-up actions of the Reconciliation event, that I was made aware of.

- Houtkloof, near Napier in South Africa's Overberg region, is being revitalized as a stop on a new Moravian pilgrimage route connecting Genadendal and Elim. The NGK and other volunteers are busy restoring the church, the graveyard, school and other buildings around the church.
- In Kuilsrivier, Cape Town, an NGK community has donated their Digteby church building to the local Moravian Church.
- At the the Genadendal museum entrance is a new memorial stone presented by the NGK, commemorating Moravian woman pioneers – Lena, Willemina Stompies and Ilse Naude (born Weder).

The Lena story

The story of Genadendal is foundational for our nation's spiritual heritage, and with it the story of Lena. Through Samuel Baadjies, I was made aware of other Moravian women who had played vital roles in Christian community building in challenging times. He contacted Clyde Preston in Pretoria, who had just finished a book 'Willemina Stompies – send teachers to my people'.

Rev. Edson and Sister Olwyn Wessels will help search for a play Chris Wessels wrote about the story of Lena. A future source of detail information will be the digitized diaries of Georg Schmidt and of the three later missionaries who met Mother Lena. Judith will keep me updated on the initiative by the Genadendal archives.

A possible Germany 2026 outreach

Here a few responses when I shared the vision of young Christians from South African tribes and nations to meet German young Christians in a joint discovery of our spiritual heritage, hopefully already in 2026:

- Young people of YWAM in Worcester and Muizenberg have active contact with YWAM in Herrnhut;
 - Zimbawian Sister Gertrud of YWAM Muizenberg comes regularly to pray in Genadendal since the 'Pilgrimage of Grace';
 - Bishop Augustine Joemath would be a key contact for the Moravian Church, as he is their contact to Germany and their strongest promotor of prayer;
 - The Overberg group of Moravian churches, including Elim and Genadendal, has an active partnership with Ettlingen (a charming historic town in Baden-Württemberg, Germany). A young lady from Elim is presently in Germany for a year;
 - Greyton apparently has a vibrant Christian youth;
 - According to Angela, Sophia has wonderful believing daughters;
 - Judith appreciated our consideration of her becoming part of the team.
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