

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 2:41-47

**1**

The Love Feast, or Agape Meal, is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry and expressing the koinonia (community, sharing, fellowship) enjoyed by the family of Christ.

The modern history of the Love Feast began when Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians in Germany introduced a service of sharing food, prayer, religious conversation, and hymns in 1727.



**2**

The first Moravian Lovefeast was served in Germany on August 13, 1727, following the Renewal of the Moravian Church. Lovefeast is styled after the common meal partaken in love and fellowship by the early Church (as described in the Book of Acts). After the memorable celebration of the holy communion on August 13, seven groups of the participants continued to talk over the great spiritual blessing which they had experienced and were reluctant to separate and return to their own homes for the noonday meal. Count Zinzendorf, sensing the situation, sent them food from his manor house, and each group partook together, continuing in prayer, religious conversation, and the singing of hymns. This incident reminded Zinzendorf of the New Testament agape feast, and the idea was fostered until lovefeasts became a custom in Moravian life. They were introduced wherever new settlements were founded and so came to America.

**3**

The lovefeast seeks to strengthen the bonds and the spirit of harmony, goodwill, and congeniality, as well as to forgive past disputes and instead love one another.



**4**

Testimonies and praise are the focal point in most Love Feasts.

Testimonies may include personal witness to God's grace or accounts of what God has been doing in the lives of others.



**5**

“The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

Psalm 126:3



**6**

Do you have a praise to  
God to share? What is  
God doing in your life?

(Go around the table  
& share)



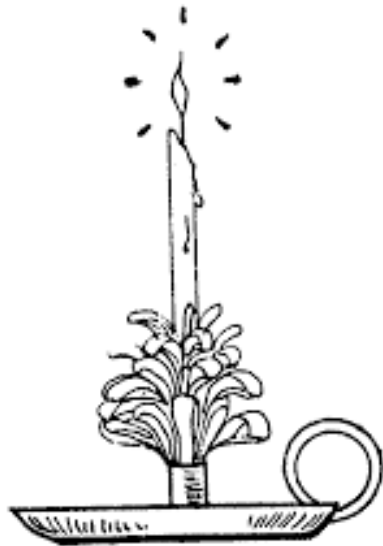
7

Use of the candles on Christmas Eve was first recorded in 1747 in Marienborn, Germany. The Gemein Diarium (manuscript church newspaper) for December 24, 1747, tells that John von Watteville (“Brother Johannes”) held a watch service for the children and after a hymn was sung then “asked questions concerning the birth of Jesus, and the children answered...” Brother Johannes spoke of the inexpressible blessedness which came through the birth of Jesus; among other things that by His wounds and pierced side He had lighted a blood-red flame in every heart, which would burn forever to His joy and our salvation. For an impressive reminder of this each child was to receive a burning taper tied with a small red ribbon. Then the children held up their tapers and Brother Johannes sang...”

8

The custom of candles for the children on Christmas Eve quickly became traditional in the church, and the Moravians brought it with them to America, where the first reference to the use of candles is in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1756.

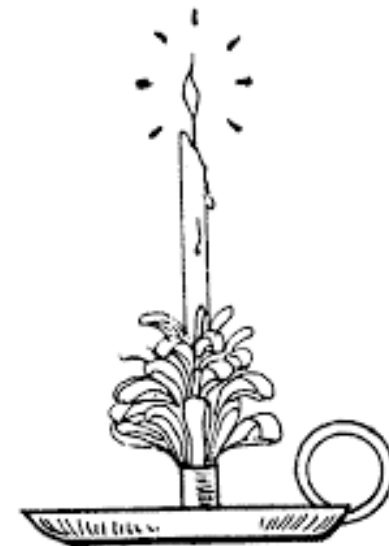
In North Carolina, candles were first used in 1762 at the children's Christmas lovefeasts at Bethabara and at Bethania, a nearby Moravian community founded in 1759. The first Christmas lovefeast in Salem was held in 1771.



**9**

For many years, the practice of giving lighted wax tapers or candles at Christmas Eve lovefeasts continued to be limited to the children. But eventually they became a beloved part of adult Christmas Eve lovefeasts as well.

...And today, for the old and young alike, the candles are symbolic of Christ as the light of the world and of a Christian's witness to follow Him as that light.



**10**

Music has always been a very integral part of Moravian life and very much a part of Christmas tradition.

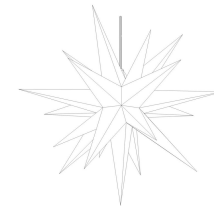
The beautiful Christmas hymn

“Morning Star” is sung today antiphonally (responsively) at the Christmas Eve lovefeasts at Home Moravian Church in Old Salem...This hymn is today one of the most cherished and loved hymns of the Moravian church.

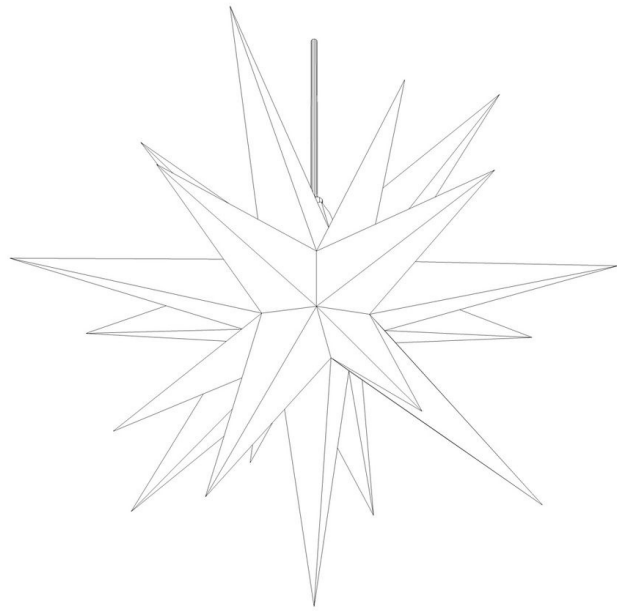


**11**

The Words for “Morning Star” were written in 1657 by a German physician, Johann Scheffler (1624-1677) of Silesia. The Bethabara congregation diary for December 24, 1812, records: “The Christmas Eve service for small children and babies was held at five o’clock in the afternoon. The adult congregation and the larger children assembled for the same purpose at seven o’clock...At the close of the service wax tapers were given to the children, which increased their Christmas joy, and holding the burning tapers in their hands they sang the hymn, ‘Morning Star, O cheering sight!’”

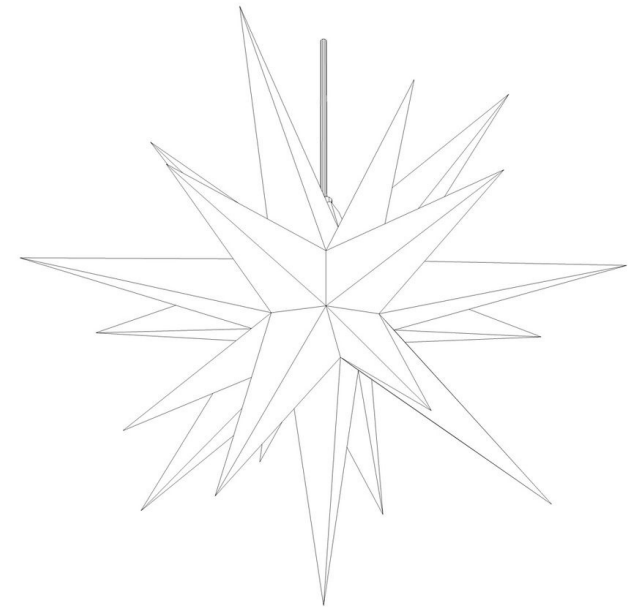


**12**



The Revered Francis F. Hagen (1818-1907), while a Single Brother teaching in the Boys' School in Salem, composed in 1836 the music for "Morning Star" that is used today.

**13**



Morning Star, O cheering sight!  
Ere thou cam'st,  
how dark earth's night!  
Jesus mine, in me shine;  
In me shine, Jesus mine;  
fill my heart with light divine.

**14**

The hymns “Softly the Night is Sleeping” by Massah M. Warner and “Christ the Lord, the Lord Most Glorious” by Edward W. Leinbach are also traditionally used in the Christmas Eve lovefeast services in Home Moravian Church. Warner was a Moravian organist and composer of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Leinbach was a Moravian organist and composer of Salem.



**15**

Softly the night is sleeping,  
On Behlehem's peaceful hill  
Silent the shepherds watching,  
The gentle flocks are still;  
But hark! The wondrous music  
Falls from the opening sky  
Valley and cliff reecho  
Glory to God on high!



**16**



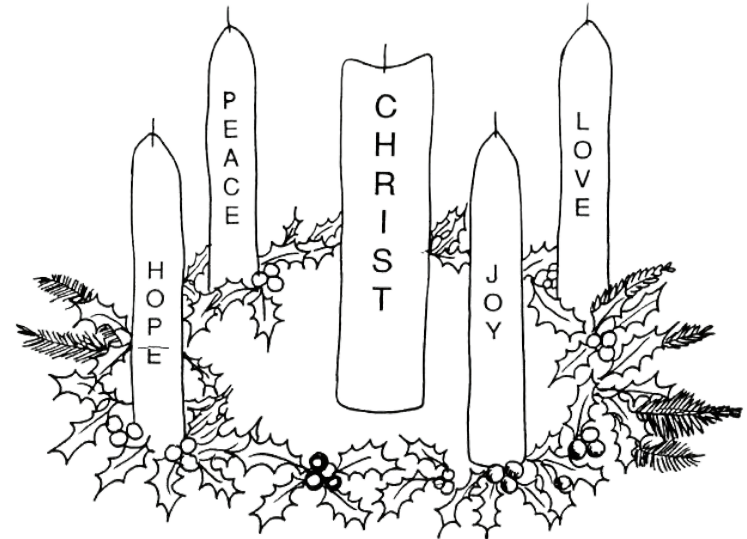


Come with the gladsome shepherds,  
Quick hast'ning from the fold,  
Come with the wise men bringing  
Incense and myrrh and gold;  
Come to Him poor and lowly,  
Around the cradle throng,  
Come with your hearts of sunshine,  
And sing the angels' song.

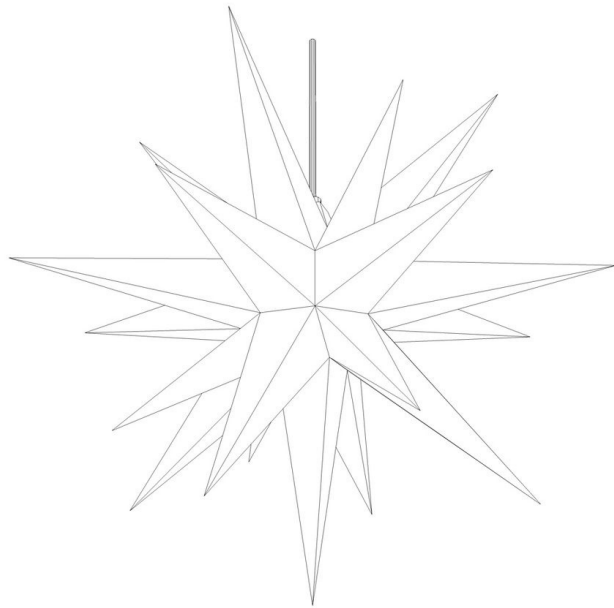
17

Weave ye the wreath unfading,  
The fir tree and the pine,  
Green from the snows of winter,  
To deck the holy shrine;  
Bring ye the happy children,  
For this is Christmas morn:  
Jesus the sinless infant,  
Jesus the Lord is born.

Glory to God it rings again,  
Peace on earth, good will to men,  
Good will, good will to men.



18



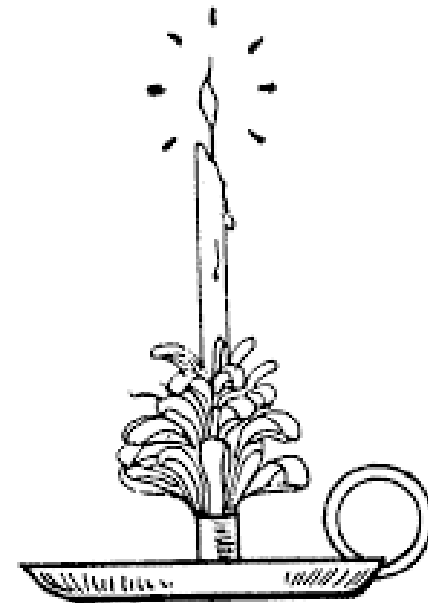
Christ the Lord, the Lord most glorious,  
Now is born; O Shout aloud!  
Man by Him is made victorious;  
Praise your Savior, hail your God!

Praise the Lord! for on us shineth  
Christ the Sun of righteousness;  
He to us in love inclineth,  
Cheers our souls  
with pard'ning grace.

**19**

Praise the Lord,  
Whose saving splendor  
Shines into the darkest night;  
O what praises shall we render  
For this never-ceasing light.

Praise the Lord, God our salvation,  
Praise Him who retrieved our loss;  
Sing, with awe and love's sensation,  
Hallelujah, God with us.



**20**

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