

SISTER EMMA KINGHAN

The Moravian woman that most inspired and continues to inspire me is not a historical figure; she has not had books and articles written about her, she is very much still alive and in fact she is younger than me. Sr. Emma Kinghan is the middle daughter of Sr. Dorothy and Br. Ivan Kinghan, who are long time members of University Road Moravian Church, Belfast, in the Irish District of the British Province. Sr. Emma has a younger sister Karen and an older sister Clare, both who have links to the Moravian Church, but none so strong as Emma's. Sr. Emma is also driven by a sense of love and care for her fellow human beings, which has led her to use her skills as a doctor both within the British Isles and abroad over the years.

Ever since she was a teenager Sr. Emma has helped out at University Road, first in the Sunday School, then on committee, undertaking many unsung tasks, which help to keep the congregation going. There has not been a Christingle Service over the last decade or more that has not been improved by helping hand and a whole generation of our young people have benefitted from her wisdom, patience and guidance. Sr. Emma has also been invaluable to the work of Irish District Youth, which involves such things as leading youth camps and running marathons and has served as a staff member at nearly a dozen Summer Camps over in England, working mostly with the 15 – 17 age group. This task involves helping to run the camp and escorting the young people from the Irish District on their journey to and from camp.

In Sr. Emma I also see a dedicated daughter, who would do anything for her sisters in their homes and her often ailing parents in their home, devotion that extends to the whole congregation family. Sr. Emma has been more than willing to share her medical proficiency with others at various church events as well as overseas. For instance, for her medical elective as part of her training to become a doctor Sr. Emma decided to work in Kenya amongst the poorer sections of society there. Years later, as part of her care of the wider world, she worked in South Africa with AIDS victims and their families. I feel that it won't be long before she is off to other foreign shores to offer what help she can to those less fortunate than herself, bringing, no doubt, the same levels of duty and care as she has so many times before.

Now, as if all these attributes and abilities were not enough Sr. Emma also brings a theological dimension to play, which I find the most inspirational of all. I was trained as a minister at Northern College in Manchester, England, which is generally regarded as a fairly liberal college, with a smattering of feminist theology thrown in for good measure. It is fair to say that I was receptive to at least some of the ideas and philosophies of the college, although I did struggle with some of what I considered to be the more excessive examples of feminist thinking. The students that come out of Northern, including myself, are often branded as 'wishy washy' and very left wing though I do see this in myself sometimes, I do not see this as necessarily a bad thing.

Sr. Emma on the other hand has a more, shall we say, biblically grounded attitude to faith and theology. I will not say that she is fundamentalistic, charismatic, evangelical or any of those other types of soubriquet that are banded around so easily these days. She knows exactly what she believes and she is not afraid to discuss and defend her faith with anyone and everyone she

meets. In no way does she ever brow beat or Bible bash people. She simply states her case, whilst retaining a healthy respect for whoever she happens to be talking to, and it is this attribute of hers that inspire me most. I often have the great privilege of working with her at youth events and church activities and I find that this interaction with her grounds me and brings my work onto a more sensible median pathway.

Whatever flights of fancy I might want to take with regard to my personal theology I find that her steady and sure input will mean that the work that we do together will be measured, better presented and much more useful and helpful to the people that we are working with. I do so hate the term 'lay person' but I find that Sr. Emma, a person who has no formal theological training and who is not ordained, has a wisdom, insight and understanding of the work and the word of God. In her daily life, in her worship and in her work for God's church she is an inspiration not only to me but most people who meet her and spend any time with her. She has been and continues to be an asset to University Road and the other churches that she works with, a real shining light in the firmament of God's people.

Now, before you start to think that I have lost the plot and gone off in poorly penned poetical slew of adoration, these writings do come from a genuine appreciation of Sr. Emma as a worker and a witness for the Lord. I wish that there were a lot more like her in the Moravian church and although I see that there are sisters and brothers, for that matter, like her within the Unity there is room for so many more. I do realise that this essay is submitted in a competition to find the best penned work and not the best Moravian women, but I can only conclude by declaring that among many others Sr. Emma is an inspiration, not only to me, but to so many others as well.

Submitted by:

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