Fire touches our South African Spiritual Heritage

A fire ripped through Clarkson's historic Moravian Church on Tuesday (**November, 25, 2025**), destroying its iconic grass roof, pipe organ and wooden pews, leaving congregants and residents mourning the loss of a treasured landmark.

The Herald

Bishop Rodger Ruiters writes: The past days were very hectic, we are extremely busy putting all systems in place and finalize all the documentation, to start with the restoration process. Because it's a heritage building, we need to get permission from the Heritage Board, to start with the work. We have formed a restoration committee, consisting of members from our congregation. The induction of members will be on Sunday, 7 December, so that we can officially start with our assignment. The Clarkson Restoration Committee will do our best to rebuild our church to its former glory. The Lord will help us. **Amen!**

History of Clarkson is very much linked to history of slavery. It was not only a place of refuge for slaves freed in 1838 but also served to accommodate the Fingo people recently settled in the area. In 1839 Governor Napier promised to grant five morgen of land and William Wilberforce in Britain provided 200 pounds received from his friend Thomas Clarkson (who fought for abolition of slavery in British parliament) to set up the new mission station that was named after Clarkson. Set between the southern slopes of the Langeberg mountains and the Tsitsikama river, the station had all the attributes for a mission settlement - good water, garden and pasture land, as well as a large indigenous forest. In late 1839, it was decided to build a church with the services of ex-slave artisans from the small community. The water-driven mill was constructed also before 1841. It served not only the needs of mission dwellers but of the surrounding farms as well. Of the settlement initiative under Bishop Hans Peter Hallbeck, a scholar would later write: "… within the framework of the turbulent South African mission history of that period one reads with admiration about the well-planned, prudent, purposeful progress of the Moravian Mission."

Krüger, B. (1966). The Pear Tree Blossoms – The History of the Moravian Church in South Africa (Part I).

In November 2021, Yorke, Christien and Eberhard undertook a UPFSA outreach to Moravian mission stations across the Cape: *"To connect to the spiritual and physical blessing that European / German / Moravian missionaries brought to South Africa almost 300 years ago."* We were wonderfully received in Clarkson, overnighted in Bishop Ruiters' home and had a candle light dinner with Rev. Chandre Davids and elders Jerome and Lloyd. We learned a lot about the Khoikhoi (mens mens) people and their love for Jesus. "Maak my toe onder die bloed van Jesus" - this covered all their pain. On the way back to our beds we heard 'Silent Night' – the Clarkson brass band practising – all young. What a wonderful heritage – we later wrote: ***"we believe, we have discovered the soul of our nation".***

Experiencing our wonderful heritage just 4 years ago, almost to the day (November, 2021)