

The Christingle Story

The custom of the Christingle began in the Moravian Church and was first used as part of a Christmas Children's Festival in the Marienborn Congregation in Germany on the 24th December 1747; this service was conducted by Bishop John de Watteville.



No one knows for certain when the word "Christingle" was first used or from what it derived, but wherever the Moravians went in the great outreach of missionary evangelism in the 18th and 19th centuries they took with them the custom of the Christingle.

The symbolism gradually developed and today in the Moravian Church in Britain, the Christingle consists of an orange representing the World, with the candle inserted in the centre and lit to represent Christ the Light of the World.

The candle used to be held on a goose quill, part of which was split into fronds, on which were impaled nuts, fruits, raisins and sweets. These stood for the created order over which Christ is King, and for the fruits of the earth and the benefits that come to our lives through God's bounty and goodness.

Since goose quills are not so readily available. Today we use cocktail sticks on which to impale the fruit, the wood still being part of God's created order.

The red crepe paper forms a frill at the base of the candle and reminds us of Christ's Passion, through which our redemption has come. A white frill often used denotes the purity of Christ's life as an example for us all.

The Christingle Service is usually held on the Sunday before Christmas, and is a Children's Celebration in which we place the child in the midst of all we do, just as the Christ - Child is the centre of all our lives.

At the climax of the service, each child receives a lighted Christingle and in the magical moment of the darkened Church, the visual symbol tells the truth of the Christmas story, - that in the darkness of the world there has shined a great light. In the darkness, with the lighted Christingle the Children sing the Traditional Moravian Carol: Morning Star, O Cheering sight.

The Moravian Church established Christingle in 1747 as a powerful and moving symbol of Christ's light and his love for all people. The Children's Society introduced it to the Church of England in 1968 and it is now a popular, much-loved family event.