

**Bermudian Church of the Brethren**

**WEDNESDAY's WORD** – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler

to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week

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## Real?

I'm just getting settled back in from our Church of the Brethren Annual Conference which was held this year in Grand Rapids, MI. AC is the way we in the Church of the Brethren make denominational decisions. Based on the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 we are a bottom up ... not top down structure. The big decisions of our life together are not made by an executive in an ivory tower. Instead every congregation, no matter how small, has the right to send a delegate to AC. And those delegates ... men, women, youth, middle aged, gray, been Brethren for generations, new to the Brethren, liberal, conservative, Pentecostal, moderate, evangelical, clergy & lay ... those delegates make the decisions for the Church ... we pray ... guided by the Holy Spirit & God's Word! It's not perfect! We are in a difficult place currently, the foundations of this 300 year old "family" are shaken & cracked, and fracture seems very possible. But it is the Biblical model for church structure and frankly I love it!

Getting nearly 700 congregational delegates to agree is an interesting concept! And hard work! Any member of the entire Church is free to speak, and when we get onto controversial issues they line up at the mics to give their 3 minute speech. Then come the amendments, the amendments to amendments, and the substitute motions ... oh baby! It can get long and tedious. But frankly I love it!

We wrap the main reason for Annual Conference (the business sessions) in worship services, concerts, service activities, children's activities, youth activities, hearings on current business items, insight sessions (hour long seminars on a wide range of topics), a blood drive for the host city, quilting (which then are auctioned to support ministries), meal events ... and lots and lots of visiting ... it truly is like a big family reunion with over 2,000 in attendance. I have dear, dear friends that I only see once a year at AC. Yes, I love AC!

Now I am serving once again on Standing Committee (misnamed because we do very little 'standing' – but spend days 'sitting' in meetings), a small group of 37 delegates representing our 24 Districts. We meet in the days before AC begins and go over every agenda item and discuss, debate & suggest an action for the AC delegates. When AC begins the delegates are free to accept, reject or amend the SC recommendations ... but it gives the larger body a starting point. I really enjoy serving on SC!

My Cathy traveled along with me once again this year. With a stash of reading material, she cranked the air conditioning in our luxurious room in the Amway Grand Plaza conference hotel to "artic," and enjoyed the peace & quiet while I was in long days of meetings. Through the days of SC and then AC, as I would meet old friends, they almost always would ask about Cathy. I would say, "She's here!" They would comment that they looked forward to seeing her.

As the long week went on Cathy was very content to relax in the room. We ate most of our meals in the room. She made it to a couple worship services, and one meal event, but mostly stayed in the room.

A number of people teasingly said to me mid-week, *"You say Cathy is here, but we've never seen her! Are you sure she is really here?"* Some may have been thinking I was a bit delusional ... that Cathy wasn't really with me at all!

That really made me think about our relationship with our Lord Jesus. We live in a day where increasingly the world around us doesn't really believe that Christ exists. Everyone does what seems right to them, what makes them feel good, with no consideration of a God who calls to purity and who judges sin. They think of us who invest our time in Church & Kingdom work as being very foolish and superstitious.

***"...people say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"*** Psalm 42:3 NIV

***"...my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"*** Psalm 42:10 NIV

And for those of us who live in expectation of the soon return of our Lord as prophesied so clearly in God's Word ... well the taunts remain,

***"They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' He promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'" 2 Peter 3:4 NIV***

How do we know the Lord is real? Because we spent time with Jesus this morning! How did I know Cathy was in the hotel room? Because I dined with her last evening and kissed her gently on the cheek as I left for my early morning meeting. The others had only heard me 'say' that Cathy was there, I had actually been 'with' her!

There's a powerful lesson here! Folks may hear us talk 'about' Jesus. They may 'see' us active in church. But they have not been 'with' Jesus. How can they believe? Our calling, our task, our passion must be to bring people into the Living Presence of Jesus. Have you ever offered to pray with an unbelieving friend or co-worker in a time of trouble? We invite friends to a ball game. Have we invited friends to worship? Bring them to His Presence!

Maybe you yourself are asking today, "Where is God?" "Is He real?" Dear one, take my hand, come ... into the Presence of your Living Lord! Sing with me,

*In and out of situations, That tug-of-war at me, All day long I struggle, For answers that I need,  
But then I come into Your Presence, And all my questions become clear, And for this sacred moment, No doubts can interfere.*

Chorus:

*In the Presence of Jehovah, God Almighty, Prince of Peace, Troubles vanish, hearts are mended, In the Presence of The King*

*Through His love the Lord provided, A place for us to rest, A place to find the answers,  
In the hour of distress, Now there's never any reason, For you to give up in despair,  
Just slip away and breathe His name, For He will surely meet you there.*

*Chorus:*

*In the Presence of Jehovah, God Almighty, Prince of Peace, Troubles vanish, hearts are  
mended, In the Presence of The King*

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In His Presence ... won't you join me?

Pastor Larry <><