

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

July 11 in the year of our Lord 2018 - #748

The Face in the Mirror

Last week was Annual Conference for the Church of the Brethren. The “Big Meeting!” A time when Brethren from all around the country and the world gather to seek the mind of Christ and make decisions together ... a model we have taken from the Acts 15 record of, what I affectionately refer to as, “*the first Annual Conference*,” in Jerusalem!

We make our decisions together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Brethren authority is not centered in an office by a top official. Brethren authority is centered in the Body. This year we were gathered in Cincinnati. In 1844 our Bermudian congregation hosted Annual Conference on the Peter Dierdorff farm a little over a mile from our church. Bread was baked for the crowd of over 2000 at the farm now owned by Don & Willi Julius and floated across the Conewago Creek by boat to the Conference site. Business items at that 1844 Annual Conference included the question of whether it was OK for Brethren to become legislators? The Conference decision was, “*We cannot see how a follower of the meek and lowly Savior can seek and accept an office of this kind consistently with the gospel he professeth.*” Another query (question) had to do with instructions for singing in church meetings. Part of the answer to that query was, “*Avoid light tunes which make us merry rather than serious.*” Another discussion had to do with confession. “*When sin has been committed, a public confession shall be made. A private confession is not enough.*” Weighty matters!

This year in Cincinnati we met in the very nice Duke Energy Center ... a far cry from the Dierdorff barn! And I stayed in a Hilton. Also, I suspect, a far cry from the housing arrangements for out of town guests in 1844! Our discussions included caring for creation, congregational vitality, and a new philosophy for our world mission efforts. We also began a new effort that you will be hearing a lot about ... **Compelling Vision**. An effort to hear from the Church as we seek the Lord together for a way forward from the divisions that have plagued us in recent times. Every Church of the Brethren member will be invited to help us craft our Compelling Vision!

It was noon time break one day, I went back to my room for lunch. I was tired and stretched out on my bed with a bag of popcorn ... deep in thought. I soon drifted off only to be awakened by a knock at the door. It was housekeeping staff. The young black woman smiled at me and said she could come back. I explained that I would be leaving soon and that she should come right in. I sat in a chair out of her way and made small talk. She would answer each question ... looking at me with a broad smile. “*The weather is really hot!*” Looking at me ... Smile! “*Yes, very hot.*” “*How many rooms do you have to clean each day?*” Looking at me ... Smile! “*20.*” “*Wow, that’s a lot! That must keep you busy!*” Looking at me ... Smile! “*Yes, it does.*”

She finished. I thanked her. I gathered my things to head back to the Convention Center. I stepped into the bathroom to run a comb through my hair. When I looked in the mirror ... I was startled by what I saw! My beard was full ... and I mean full ... of popcorn! I guess as I stretched out on the bed nibbling at the popcorn and fell asleep that my beard caught the fall off. I laughed and felt so embarrassed. That's why she kept looking at me the way she did. It must have been all she could do to keep from laughing at the old guy with the gray Amish-like beard full of popcorn!

When people look at you what do they see? When people observe your life what do they notice? When people see you in a store check-out line, or in rush hour traffic, what do they see? When people read your social media posts what do they hear? When neighbors interact with you over the fence what do they observe? We are to reflect Christ to the world. Every action, every word, every response ... is to be a reflection of the One who created us in His image, saved us by the blood of Christ, and dwells within by the power of the Holy Spirit. If people look at you and see worldly "popcorn" rather than Jesus ... well ... you've some growing in Christ to do.

"...we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him." 2 Corinthians 3:18 LB

"Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to His plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. God, in His foreknowledge, chose them to bear the family likeness of His Son...." Romans 8:29 Phillips

So let's each take a long careful look in the "mirror" of our lives. Every word and every action. Are we reflecting Jesus to a waiting world?

Popcorn free Pastor Larry <><