

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
October 10 in the year of our Lord 2018 - #761

AMAZING NIGHT – a true story

Last Sunday evening was Love Feast at Bermudian Church of the Brethren. For those reading this who are not Brethren, let me explain that “Love Feast” is the way the Brethren celebrate Holy Communion. It is based upon the New Testament record, the histories of the earliest days of Christianity, and over 300 years of Brethren practice. Love Feast is a reenactment and remembering of the Last Supper with Jesus and His Disciples and includes moments of feet washing (as recorded and commanded in John 13), a simple meal (as recorded in Luke 22 & 1 Corinthians 11), and Holy Communion (also recorded in Luke 22 & 1 Corinthians 11). Some of the ‘wrappings’ of the Love Feast service vary slightly from congregation to congregation, and some have changed slightly through the years, but the basic practices and tenets, and the Biblical basis for the Love Feast remains unchanged.

It is impossible to talk about “who” the Brethren are without talking about the Love Feast.

Two of our most respected Brethren historians, Donald Durnbaugh & Dale Brown have each written,

“The Love Feast was the high point of the Church year.”

Donald Durnbaugh in *The Church of the Brethren Past and Present*

“Historically the Love Feast has been the high point of Brethren liturgical life”

Dale Brown in *The Church of the Brethren Past and Present*

But the Love Feast is not something that the Brethren created or own! It's not just dusty old Brethren outdated tradition. Philip Schaff (NOT a Brethren author) writing in his book, *History of the Christian Church*, explains,

“...the Love Feast belonged in fact only to the childhood and first love of the church At first Communion was joined with a Love Feast, and was celebrated in the evening, in memory of the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples... Tertullian (the ancient Church historian, lived 160-240 AD) gives a detailed description of ‘the Agape’ It was a family feast, where rich and poor, master and slave met on the same footing partaking of a simple meal....”

So we cherish the Love Feast! And Sunday evening was no different. We hold Love Feast today in The Gathering Place, our new multi-purpose building, a change for us from a long tradition of having Love Feast in the sanctuary. Here we sit at round tables face-to-face with our brothers & sisters ... truly family! Our Bermudian Deacons had worked long & hard to prepare beautifully for the service. The room looks so beautiful all prepared! Everything was ready! The smell of the soup was rich and appetizing! There is always an air of anticipation! But tonight would be different. The smaller than usual crowd gathered and found their way to the tables. Brothers on the right side of the room, our Sisters at tables on the left side of the room.

At the front of the room were two tables with 4 men & 4 women who would share in the Scripture readings & prayers of the service. An air of love & reverence filled the room!

As the service was just beginning I noticed it. It took me by such surprise that I missed a part of the service outlined in the worship folder. Entering quietly from the back of the room. It was Jesus! Deacon Chair Brett Miller greeted Him. Brett asked if Jesus wanted to be ushered to the front tables to lead us but He touched Brett's shoulder and raised His hand with a warm smile. He motioned that He would just be seated here at one of the tables at the back of the room among other Brothers. Brett was so moved by the presence of the Lord, and troubled to the point of tears that our entire Church Family wasn't present to welcome the Lord that he was moved to go into the quiet of the sanctuary for prayer and repentance. The service was sweet, beautiful, and worshipful as always. The beautiful hymns sung a Capella, the richness of the Scriptures, the delicious thick soup cooked in the old iron kettles, the humility of feet washing, expressions of love shared, the holiness of remembrance of the sacrifice of our Lord with the traditional taste of homemade Brethren unleavened communion bread and a sip of sweet blood-red grape juice ... all so wonderful, so meaningful, so moving ... and made all the more so by the presence of Jesus with us in the room!

As I met alone with Jesus later He asked why only about 1/3 of our Sunday morning worship attendance had been present for Love Feast? *"Did you tell them I would be present?" "Did you tell them that I love them no matter how sinful they may feel?" "Did you tell them that to share in this remembrance is to express their love to me?" "Did you tell them that it's not about them ... their preferences ... their 'likes' or 'dislikes' ... their comfort or uncomfortableness with feet washing ... but that the service is all about me?" "What was so important in their busy lives that they couldn't come and meet with me?" "Did you tell them my promise to bless them if they share in this remembrance?" "Why are so many of your newer members here and so many of the 'long time' Brethren absent?"* I didn't have answers for Jesus. Brett and I stood alone in the darkness of Shepherd's Hall talking after most had left. Reflective, still moved by Jesus' presence! Still so thankful for the 2000+ year practice of Love Feast and for being part of a Church that has held to the sacred Biblical ordinance. And still without answers for the questions Jesus asked. It truly was an amazing night!

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." John 13:14, 15, 17 NIV

"...do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19 NIV

"For wherever two or three people come together in my Name, I am there, right among you!" Matthew 18:20 Phillips

Awed by His Presence! Pastor Larry <><