

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
February 26, in the year of our Lord 2020 – **ASH WEDNESDAY** #824

Mission Trip Musings

The week of February 16-22 fourteen of us from our Bermudian Church Family + one dear friend of our congregation shared in ministry in Tampa, FL with Brethren Disaster Ministries. It was a week of hard work, great friendship & real blessing! We worked in three homes that had been damaged by Hurricane Irma in September 2017. 12 million people in the Tampa area were without power. The storm damaged many roofs with damages topping \$50 billion dollars. Disaster response has been on-going in Tampa for the last 2 ½ years. But in two of the homes we worked in folks were still living in the storm damaged homes. Until you saw it for yourself, it was hard to imagine folks living in those conditions! Life around them seemed to be perfectly normal but these dear folks were living in the dampness, mold, and damage ... 2 ½ years later!

All week as we worked, and laughed and enjoyed the ministry together ... when something unique or funny would happen someone would invariably say, *“That’ll show up in Wednesday’s Word.”* So as not to disappoint ... I’ll take some time in these weekly reflections to share some of our amazing week.

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) organizes this work so well. Tool trailers with tool boxes for electrical, plumbing, painting, drywall, carpentry etc. are color coded and every box has a laminated card listing the contents of the box. And all the power tools a guy could dream for are available. As the team of volunteers are assigned their work places for the week a list is made of which tool boxes and which power tools are needed for the work you will be doing. At the end of the week the tool boxes are inventoried to be ready for the next week’s team.

We stayed at Hyde Park Presbyterian Church in Tampa in very comfortable arrangements. A volunteer cook for the week prepares cooked breakfast & supper. We pack our lunches in the morning and place in the cooler for the job site we are assigned to. BDM has done this for years and has it down to a science. Everything is organized well. Two longer term site-coordinator volunteers work with the weekly teams and the projects to keep the work flowing.

Each morning someone from the group leads us in devotions at breakfast. On Wednesday I shared a Bible study on ***“The Uniqueness of Christian Service.”*** I thought I’d share the highlights of that study with you today.

Ninety-Eight (98) years ago two Brethren missionaries, H. Stover Kulp & Albert Helser planted the seeds of Christianity and the Brethren in northern Nigeria. Today the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) is the largest Brethren body in the world. It went very slow at first. But one of the “make a difference” moments was when Kulp & Helser introduced their new friends to Brethren Love Feast. As the two humble men knelt before their Nigerian friends and washed their feet the Nigerians were wide-eyed. One Nigerian leader later said, *“We had never seen a white man wash a black man’s feet.”*

Lots of people serve. There are many great service organizations doing fine work. But is there something different about Christian service? Let's see what the Bible says.

1. **Christian service requires no special talent.** We serve as we are with what we have. Now in Tampa we had some men who were very talented with construction skills. So thankful for Joel, Gary, Randy, Roy, Ron & Jeff Staub! But most of the rest of us gave the best we could to do the best we could. Lois, Harold, Kerry, Traci, Barb B, Barb S., Carol, Jeff & I had varying degrees of construction understanding and skills ... but all worked so hard! Filling the dumpsters with the results of demo work, drywall work, painting, sanding, clean up, running for tools & materials. Each one gave something important! As Christian servants ... we each can do something!

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10 NIV

2. **The greater serves the lesser.** In the world of service, it is always the "lesser" serving the "greater." The slave, the household servant, the employee, the waiter... there's always that old understanding that when serving you are "beneath" the one you serve. In business it becomes, "the customer is always right." Now, don't get hung up on this, but in Christ this is turned around completely. We serve with joy those who from a worldly perspective would be "below" us. Jesus did just that as He "served" us. He calls us not to worry about status or position but to put the concerns of others ahead of our own.

"A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.'" Luke 22:24-27 NIV

3. **The Christian servant see needs.** It is so easy to be so focused on our own responsibilities and agenda that we can miss those near us who need help. Christ wants to give us His eyes to see & respond! One from our team noticed that there was a nice-looking church on the same block as the house they were working on, and wondered if no one from the church took notice of the problem for this dear soul ... their neighbor.

"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" 1 John 3:17 NIV

The Christian servant sees Jesus in the one they are serving. One of the wonderful promises of Scripture is that as we serve the least, the lost, the lonely ... Christ receives it as an offering unto Himself. We need no other incentive, I suggest, to eagerly serve others! In those dear souls in Tampa bravely enduring life surrounded by black mold ... I saw Jesus!

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40 NIV

So, with special thanks to Harold & Lois, Kerry & Traci, Randy & Barb, Joel & Barb, Carol, Gary, Ron, Roy, Jeff and Jeff Staub for their service witness last week; and a big thanks to you for all the ways you serve ... with joy we serve our wonderful Lord!

Your brother & servant, Pastor Larry <><