

## **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

December 16, in the year of our Lord 2020 - #863

## **Christmas Eve at the Altland Meeting House**

Today feels like Christmas! Last evening, we recorded our Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service at historic Altland Meeting House around the theme, “*Christ’s Presence in The Quiet.*” The candlelight twinkled in the windows, the kerosene lamps gave the room a cozy glow, the worship center glowed in a wondrous way. Folks gathered with such joy written on their faces (eyes twinkling even from behind masks!) There was a soft murmur in the room as folks visited. It felt just like Christmas Eve. We sang the carols ... the sound of the Capella singing in the old meeting house is always amazing! We read the Scriptures. We passed the light of Christ in a time of candle lighting to end the service. Folks greeted one another warmly as they ventured back out into the dark and cold.

One of the hardest things for Church leadership during this pandemic is deciding what we can do safely and what should be set aside for now. Christmas Eve without Altland? That was almost unthinkable! But as we did think ... how could we safely put 200 persons in the lovely old meeting house? How could we limit the number? So, we decided that we would have two services (5 pm & 10 pm) live in The Gathering Place at Bermudian on Christmas Eve, and we would prerecord a service from Altland with a limited number of persons scattered around the old room. I wondered how it would feel! It felt perfect! And now, today there’s snow ... it must be Christmas!

If you’ve never worshipped with us at Altland on Christmas Eve, or if your heart is aching for this beloved tradition ... good news! ... **you can join us for Christmas Eve from Altland Meeting House at 7 pm on Christmas Eve (or anytime thereafter) on our YouTube channel at BermudianCoB.**

It was Christmas Day 1795 when representatives from the German Reformed, German Lutheran, and German Baptist Brethren met at the Philip Altland farm, in what is now Paradise Township, York County, Pennsylvania, to sign the 27 X 29 - inch sheep skin deed to set aside one acre for a union house of worship and school. This west side of the Susquehanna River was the wild frontier. Life wasn’t easy here. Folks needed to stick together. The simple architecture of the meeting house reflects this spirit of working together. The preaching area is raised two steps, something never seen in a Brethren meeting house. The three churches used the house on a rotating basis until 1896. A union Sunday School met there until 1906. Bermudian Church of the Brethren continued to worship there every two weeks until 1920.

Then the old meeting house sat empty. Years of neglect took its toll. This faithful reminder of believers facing hard times together stood silent. Window panes broken, disrepair, a home for critters but not much else. Until a group of Bermudian youth decided to restore the old meeting

house in 1980. Their goal was to restore the house to original and hold Christmas Eve worship there. After much work, and community support, they did indeed hold the first Christmas Eve worship service there in 1981. And every year since! Going to two services in 2001 because of the growth in attendance. And 2020 will be no exception! We did Christmas Eve worship service again! Last night! And it was marvelous! And folks from all around the country and world will join us on Christmas Eve; the witness of the faithful old meeting house continuing to grow in ways those representatives could never have even dreamed about on Christmas day 1795!

Yes, Christmas 2020 is different in some significant ways. Some of these changes make us angry. Some make us sad. But the significance of what we celebrate has not changed one iota! Our Lord Jesus came from the Glory of Heaven to that little town of Bethlehem, that He might live the perfect life and become the sacrifice without blemish for our sin. And those who love Him, who are truly called as His servants, will love and work together to make a difference! On the wild frontier of Paradise Township in 1795! And in the midst of a pandemic in 2020! Joy to the world! The Lord has come!

**“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. ... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those upon whom His favor rests.”** Luke 2:10,11,14 NIV

Christmas Blessings to all! Pastor Larry <><