

## Brethren Values

In a few days, Blue River will be hosting the General Meeting of the Brethren Revival Fellowship. It was 1984 when we last were the host venue of this meeting. At each General Meeting (formerly held yearly; more recently it has alternated with the Brethren Alive weekend conference at Elizabethtown College), a focus theme is chosen, with messages that address the theme. For example, some years ago, the theme was “**Church Commitment**,” while other themes have dealt with various aspects of the New Testament teachings of the Brethren.

This year, the focus is on “**Brethren Values: What Are They and Why are They Important?**” Two noted Brethren ministers, Nathan West and Nathan Rittenhouse, will speak to those questions. While I have no idea what particulars will be considered by those good Brethren, there are several aspects of our New Testament faith that can be mentioned here.

The first important value seems like a given: That our faith is **centered on our Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament record**, and His Gospel. The eternal Son of God became a man, lived a life of perfectly fulfilling the Law of Moses, died in a finished and complete atonement for our sins, rose again bodily on the third day, ascended to Heaven, and is coming again for His Church. This is nothing short of incredible, yet it happened, and will happen. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ there is no Gospel, there is no New Testament, there is no Church, there is no salvation.

The second important value is **the Bible as God’s trustworthy Word, with the New Testament as the complete understanding of what we must believe and practice**. Through that Word God saves people, establishes the Church, corrects, reproves, exhorts, and instructs in righteousness. We have an objective standard of our faith and practice. It isn’t subject to private interpretation—that is, it does not and cannot have different meanings for different people in different ages and in different places. It is what must be believed always by all, everywhere. This is why careful study of the Bible must engage us all, and not merely the scholars, teachers, and pastors. The early Brethren gathered around the Word of God.

A third important value is that of **the importance of the ordinances of the New Testament**. An ordinance is a command of the Lord in the New Testament that requires more than one Christian to obey, and is symbolic or a sign of a deep spiritual truth. We Brethren understand that there are eight ordinances: *assembling together* (Hebrews 10:25); *baptism* (Matthew 28:18-20); the Three-fold Love Feast of *Feetwashing* (John 13:1-17), the *Lord’s Supper* (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Jude 12), and the *Communion* (1 Corinthians 11:24-26); the *Holy Kiss* (Romans 16:16; Acts 20:37); the *anointing for healing* (James 5:13-18); and the *laying on of hands* (Acts 8:17; 19:6; 1 Timothy 4:14). Every one of these ordinances is an important representation of spiritual facts which are established in the lives of true believers, and as such is an essential factor in the development of the Christian life.

A fourth important value is that of **being fully engaged with the body of believers**, that is, the Church. Not only is it an ordinance to assemble, involvement with the Church is necessary to completely grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We develop in the Christian life by the teaching, model, and work of the local church. We would no more think of a baby being born and left on its own to grow properly and in health, than we would of a Christian (being born again) and left on its own. The Church is a vital—and beyond one’s personal relationship with Christ—the vital aspect of being a complete Christian, according to the New Testament.

A fifth important value is **being engaged personally in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ**. This growing relationship develops through regular prayer (talking to God, and not stopping), reading and thorough acquaintance with the Bible, regular involvement with the Church, and telling others about Jesus as we have opportunity. Our inner spiritual life, guided by the Word of God and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, is the basis for our continuing obedience and faithfulness to the Lord.

There are other values, to be sure. Yet these are the ones that are foundational, and continue to build the life of the Church. May we have a revival of these virtues in our day! **Pastor Craig Alan Myers**