

Presidential Ponderings - December 2023

I was born and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The so-called "Christmas City" has a strong affinity for all things related to Christmas. On top of the mountain that overlooks the city there is a very bright, electrically illuminated "Star of Bethlehem" that actually appears to glow in the dark night sky. In the historic section of downtown Bethlehem, hundreds of window candles and "Moravian stars" shine onto the cobblestone streets. Horse drawn carriages ferry countless out-of-town tourists past the imposing Central Moravian Church and through the picturesque surrounding neighborhoods. Even more tourists descend on the city for the shopping ecstasy of the famed Christkindl Market. It is hard to outdo the city of Bethlehem when it comes to Christmas!

My roots are in Bethlehem, but my home is now in central PA. Christmas has a much different meaning at this stage of my life. The only presents I care about, now, are the ones that light up the eyes of my grandson. I take pleasure in our adult children who make the Holiday pilgrimage back to Harrisburg, and long for the presence of those children who live too far away to join us. I try to be generous to those charities who are supporting individuals that are experiencing health crises and/or who lack adequate resources such as housing, clothing, and food security. I recognize how fortunate I have been, and am thankful for my many blessings.

One of the good things about growing up in Bethlehem was that "Baby Jesus" was not forgotten during the Christmas season. Santa Claus was certainly popular, but the Star of Bethlehem and the multiple Nativity scenes around town were all about Mary, Joseph, and their heaven-sent baby boy. His journey and ministry might have started in Bethlehem, but it is now available worldwide, and to all who call him Savior.

May the true Light of the World shine brightly on you and your loved ones this Christmas Season.

*Merry Christmas Everyone,
Jeff Shireman, President*

