

CITATION

**In honor and celebration
of the ministry of Doug Phillips
on the occasion of his retirement
as Associate District Executive for Outdoor Ministries
Shenandoah District Church of the Brethren**

In the familiar parable of the talents recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus provides an important lesson regarding our faithful investment and stewardship of resources we have been given. The reward for the servants who doubled their master's investment is stated this way: *"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness."* While scripture does not give us specific names for the servants, let's call that first servant Doug Phillips, for Doug's life represents such a great example of someone who has heard Christ's call to service, developed and multiplied his gifts for outdoor ministry and created a partnership and legacy of faithfulness which has touched so many lives at Brethren Woods and beyond.

Upon Doug and Cindy's arrival to Brethren Woods in the Fall of 1982, they were challenged with a ministry that required revival and renewal in promotion, program and property. They went to work with some resources, but with an even larger vision founded on God's word and on prayers for direction and support. Remember, it only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all around will warm up to its glowing! That's how it is with God's love and that's how it was with the spark provided by Doug and Cindy's leadership. It soon brought the warmth of increased volunteer and financial support, additional year-round programming and staff, and new and renovated facilities.

In his 39 years of service, Doug has overseen and inspired a remarkable growth in the district's multi-faceted outdoor ministries program. Here are a few of the statistics: There were a little over 200 summer campers in 1983 and almost 800 in 2011. From 1983 through this past summer there have been nearly 23,000 children representing over 84,000 summer camper days at Brethren Woods. From the time Doug began as Director with Cindy as Part-time Program Director, there are now six full-time year-round employees, who have provided training, guidance and support for over 2500 summer staff and volunteers. The Outdoor School Program began in 2001, and has welcomed over 45,000 students with their teachers from public and private elementary schools. In addition to the Summer and Outdoor School programs, other camp-sponsored events have brought an additional 6,000 people to camp. And since 1983 Brethren Woods has hosted nearly 146,000 people representing over 260,000 camper days in a variety of church and community rental groups. From two buildings on-site in 1983, there are now 30 new and acquired structures to support the growing outdoor ministries program, as

well as numerous shelters, woodsheds and vital upgrading of roads and infrastructure throughout the expanded property.

If he could get the microphone from me right now, he'd want all of us to know that such growth in outdoor ministries could only be realized through the amazing volunteer and financial support of so many individuals, congregations and the community. Yet, it has been Doug's creativity and leadership which have provided the catalyst for individual volunteers and group workdays at camp, and for fund-raising activities like Spring Festival, the Golf Tournament, Renewing our Faith - Outdoors capital campaign and Helping Hands Scholarship program. And, inch by inch and row by row he has cultivated significant financial support from congregations and individual donors. One camp volunteer said it this way: *He can take anything and turn it into cash for the camp: a car without an engine, a meat slicer, a load of firewood or even a vague promise from a friend.*

Doug was working as a mechanic when he and Cindy were called to the district. Think about it. A good mechanic knows how to diagnose the problem or issue, how to choose the right tools for the job and then uses their skills to repair and restore the vehicle. Doug has put these attributes to use in his leadership at Brethren Woods and they were very evident in the recent challenges of navigating through the COVID pandemic and the Emerald Ash Borer infestation which devastated over 400 trees at Brethren Woods. So, let's add "mechanic" to this list of Doug's abilities shared by a supporter of the camp: *He has been a friend, a visionary, a disciplinarian, a confidant, a match maker, a counselor, a pastor, a fund raiser, an administrator, a budget developer, and above all a steadfast man of God.*

The growth in program, property and support are all certainly noteworthy and a significant reflection of his administrative skills. But it has been Doug's living faith, Christ-like actions and biblical tenets which have ensured God's very presence and activity at Brethren Woods. It is seen and felt during summer camp as children and youth experience Christ's presence while singing around a campfire during vespers at Cherry Hill. It is realized through the spiritual renewal and growth of people of all ages during retreats and family gatherings. It is embodied by the many summer and year-round volunteers who are inspired by Doug's faith and express it in these words:

A positive, energetic compassionate leader for Brethren Woods

No matter how busy he is he makes you the priority, making you feel heard, supported and cared for

He's the epitome of a servant leader

His ministry is about C A M P – Caring About Many People

Always ready with a word of encouragement

*He has led the Brethren Woods community by his example of strong Christian faith, servitude, creativity, hard work-but most of all love
When I think about Doug I think about prayer and praying for one another
He loves God, he loves the church, he loves the camp and he does all he can to help us see the world through his eyes. And then he laughs.*

Doug's commitment as Christ's servant includes his deep respect and care for God's creation, his emphasis on teamwork, his willingness to speak the truth in love, his contagious humor, his unwavering support and love of his family and his enduring and endearing friendships with so many people. In a word it's about relationships.

Do you know what it means for a person to serve nearly four decades in the same position? It means Doug has provided staff support for a district group that has had three different titles during his tenure - an Outdoor Ministries Committee, an Outdoor Ministries Board and the current Outdoor Ministries Team. While those names have evolved over time, the respect and appreciation for Doug can be clearly heard in these statements from members of those groups and Camp Reps:

*He's been the backbone of Brethren Woods
His infectious love for and belief in the camp system, and all that it provides for campers and staff has been such an asset to the camp and district
He has spread God's love to generations of young people in God's beautiful creation
Doug has a special way of making people feel they were important to the camp
Doug's ability to relate to others and his love for God and His creation have undoubtedly been responsible for the tremendous growth at Brethren Woods
Thankfulness for his vision, his tireless dedication, his passionate service and love for Christ*

Recognition of Doug's contributions to Outdoor Ministries extends well beyond our district's boundaries. Doug has received the Church of the Brethren Outdoor Ministries Association Camp Staff Award highlighting his *outstanding vision, commitment and leadership at Brethren Woods*. A director from another Church of the Brethren camp recently shared these words of admiration:

When I think about Doug I think of a loving Father and encourager who extended his paternal love to Brethren Woods, its facilities, staff and campers. His longevity in Outdoor Ministry is a role model and inspiration to me.

Doug's relationships with past and present Brethren Woods year-round staff bring these heart-felt words of tribute and love:

Doug thrived at camp, strengthening relationships with people and with the outdoors.

He's a very special guy....His sincere love of Christ is reflected in all that he does and is a blessing to everyone he meets.

One of the most influential persons in my life.

A faithful and true prayer warrior

Doug was a great mentor and friend...Some days I can still hear Doug's voice in my head reminding me to keep a sense of humor and humility and to trust in God's love and faithfulness

Another former staff person shared a litany of pranks orchestrated by Doug which included snakes in a room and a sleigh ride to the very edge of the pond. Then this person proclaimed: *He was the greatest boss I ever had*

Another of Doug's co-workers borrowed a line from a familiar commercial to say:

Like a Good Neighbor, Doug Phillips is there!

Doug is always there...witnessing to the love of Christ through so many, and not so random, acts of kindness—for campers and staff at Brethren Woods, for those neighbors living along Armentrout Path and for so many friends, because as we know, everyone is Doug's Buddy. Hear these words about friendship:

He is a very warm and caring friend who I have been blessed to know and work with.

With Doug in your corner, it means you always have someone to talk to, laugh with and even cry with if you need to. What a great buddy!

It was a joy to work with someone so passionate, thoughtful and caring. Amid some of the most stressful and busy times, Doug always took time to inquire about my well-being and give a word of encouragement

Thank you, Doug, for having such a big heart and spreading the love of Jesus to so many people at camp and in the world. The world is a better place because of you. I am a better person because of you.

May all of us agree that we are better persons because of Doug and Cindy Phillips. In addition to Cindy's staff involvement at the beginning, she has continued to be actively involved in this ministry partnership with Doug, serving the camp with her gift of music and other talents. And the camp hasn't been the only thing that has grown since Doug and Cindy arrived. These years have seen the addition of two amazing daughters, Rachel and Sarah, their wonderful husbands, Bradley and Matthew and so far, two

beautiful grandchildren, Sloane and Nolan. And while none of them could be with us today, we are blessed to hear some words from their daughters:

Rachel shares: He is selfless, driven and focused on providing for our family. I never realized until I moved to college just how rare a Dad or person like Doug was. Many times in my adult life my friends have been shocked when I share what lengths he has gone to, to show up for me, regardless of where I was living or what I needed.

And Sarah adds: He's the most thoughtful human being I know. Always putting himself after everyone else and making sure our family is always cared for. The best Buddy to our son Nolan who asks everyday when he wakes up if Pappo is here. From Gator rides to truck rides, it has been so fun watching their relationship grow. Nolan says: "Ready to go Pappo, now let's ride!"

A few years ago, Doug shared these words about the ministry of Brethren Woods. The pace of life is frantic and people leave that behind when they come to Brethren Woods and like others in scripture, they meet God in the wilderness. People young and old come to Brethren Woods to focus on the spiritual part of their lives and gain a deeper understanding of who they are and who God is. We're here to provide a place for people to meet God. Then, when their time in the wilderness is over they're empowered to go and do amazing things.

God has empowered Doug to do "amazing things" these past 39 years. Yes, people come to Brethren Woods to meet God in this wonderful community in creation. But in addition to the place, they also experience God's love and Christ's peace in the person of Doug Phillips. You can call him Doug, Dougie, Buddy, Brother, Friend, Dad, or the most recent special name, Pappo. But let us always know him as a faithful servant of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Doug, on behalf of the Shenandoah District Church of the Brethren and all those who have been blessed by your living faith and selfless leadership, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your legacy of gifts in Outdoor Ministry, for your dedication to Christ and the church and for your Christian love and support of family, friends and neighbors. We extend our prayers and best wishes to you, Cindy and your family as you begin your retirement together. Well done, good and faithful servant. God Bless You.

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