

## **Reverend William Bertram (1674-1746)**

Minister of Derry 1732-1746

Reverend William Bertram was born February 2, 1674 in Edinburgh, Scotland. He studied at Edinburgh University and was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Bangor, Ireland. In 1706, Reverend Bertram married Elizabeth Jane Gillespie. They had three children: Phebe, Elizabeth, and John.

What brought the Bertrams to the American colonies is not well documented, but it has been suggested that during political unrest in Britain, their son John disappeared. His parents, under the impression that he had come to America, traveled to Pennsylvania around 1730 searching for him. Although unable to locate their son, they decided to remain in this new country.

On September 20, 1731, Bertram was received as a member of the Synod of Philadelphia. The next year, on October 11, 1732, his membership was transferred to the newly formed Presbytery of Donegal at its first meeting. Reverend Bertram then accepted a call to “settle over the people on the Swatara, and Spring or Fishing Creeks,” later known as Derry Presbyterian Church and Paxton Presbyterian Church. He was installed as Derry Church’s first “called” pastor on November 15, 1732. Since frontier churches of this time had no ruling elders to perform the duties of Session or represent themselves at Presbytery, eight persons were recommended to assist Pastor Bertram. Their ordination and installation as Elders of the two churches occurred in September, 1733.

Bertram’s pastorate was, for the most part, harmonious and spiritually profitable. He received a small salary which was not always paid, according to Presbytery records. He was also given the right and title to the “Indian town tract” of about 350 acres in Hanover Township, on the north side of the Swatara Creek, that had been purchased from the local tribe by church members.

Bertram served both congregations until 1736, when he complained to the Presbytery of the great burden (mentally and physically) of ministering to two congregations. He was released from Paxton Church but continued to serve Derry Church until his death on May 3, 1746. He was 72 years old.

In 1741, during Bertram’s pastorate, Derry Church acquired a land grant of 102 acres from Thomas and Richard Penn, sons of William Penn.

Reverend Bertram’s family remained at Derry Church for many years. His daughter, Elizabeth, married another member of the church, James Galbraith, in 1734. Their son, Bertram Galbraith, was one of the signers of the Constitution of Pennsylvania in 1776. He was an officer of the rangers in the French and Indian war and was politically active in Lancaster County.

Reverend William Bertram, his daughter Elizabeth Galbraith, and her husband, James Galbraith, Jr., are buried in the southwest corner of Derry Church Cemetery.

In the Chapel, a memorial stained glass window to Reverend Bertram is located along the east wall.