

# Icthus News

## Spring 2007

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"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains." James 5:7

It's spring at Icthus! Trees are budding, flowers are blooming, and yesterday (3/27/07) was the last day of snow skiing at Cataloochee ski area! A new season is upon us! It's interesting that almost every time the season of "Spring" is mentioned in scripture, it is accompanied with the word "rains." We generally tend to think of rain in a negative sense, but scripture generally associates blessing with rain. The only way increase can come in the land is with rain. I hope you can take a few minutes and let me share some of the rain we have experienced, and some "showers" we see on the horizon.

The Past...

Joel 2:23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the LORD your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before.

We hosted 17 groups at the retreat center last year:

8 Jr/Sr High groups

1 Children's group

3 College groups

2 Mission groups

2 Singles groups

1 Men's group

We also hosted four over-night groups and two events at the Haven. One of the groups, 40 high school students and chaperones, arrived in six RV's as a part of their "Road Rules" camp. They spent a week traveling to a new place each night. Our two "events" consisted of our seventh annual Praise Festival that we host as a Christian alternative to Halloween. Approximately 500 local people participated! Our other event was called a "Fun Day." About 150 people from four local churches participated in the Fun Day. The day began with breakfast and preaching, then progressed to a co-ed softball/horseshoe tournament, with games/activities for small children. Then a cookout for lunch, more preaching, softball/horseshoes, games/activities. Basically it was a Fun Day!

The red house, also known as the redemption house, at the Haven was used to host a total of 47 people free of cost. Most of those were ministers and their families. Our desire is to continue this type of ministry.

During the late fall we were able to:

construct a ten foot high fence around the basketball court

complete some major road repair/construction

hydroseed road/excavation sites

excavate a site for a maintenance shed

cut seventy logs into lumber for the maintenance shed

work on a design for the new retreat center

put a deposit down on the new retreat center

take our family and staff for a week of training on "Family" at the Christian Training Center Int. in Franklin, NC

The Present...

Deuteronomy 32:2 Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

There is much going on at the present! (Isn't there always?) We just hosted our first group of the season, the Family Worship Center, from Port Orange, FL. Their theme was "Extreme," so we did some extreme things like team building, going through a high ropes course, snow skiing, white water rafting, and an extreme adventure. I'd tell you what the adventure was, but I'd have to kill you and that's a bit extreme, don't you think? Throughout all the activity there was worship, prayer, praise, discussion, and focus on what the Lord was/is teaching through the experience. Our desire is that everyone who comes here would walk away with a greater understanding that the Lord Jesus is calling us to follow Him in an up-close, personal relationship, everyday, 24/7!

We are blessed to have two wonderful brothers in the Lord serving with us at present. Lonnie Grimes II of Phenix City, AL, has been on staff with us since last summer, and will be with us until the middle of August. He then plans to go out to Redding, CA and enter the School of Ministry at Bethel Church. Pat Kelly, also of Phenix City, just joined us a few weeks ago and is blessing everyone around with his servant attitude, pies, and ninja weed-eating skills. Both Lonnie & Pat had a significant encounter with Jesus on their first visit to Icthus a few years ago. It is such a blessing to have these guys not only labor with us, but also break bread around our table and share the Word which is life!

We are diligently working on the design/plans for a new 100 bed retreat center at the Haven. We will be constructing a two story, 4,000 sq. ft. "kit" built by Deltec Homes ([www.deltecthomes.com](http://www.deltecthomes.com)) of Asheville, NC. The materials are scheduled to be delivered at the end of this September. The Deltec kit will house a kitchen/dining/meeting area on each floor, and will be connected to a two-story dorm on either side. The whole structure will be close to 9800 sq. feet. It is very exciting (and sometimes exhausting) praying/working through the details!

As exciting as the new plans, the new season, our new staff, etc. is, our most exciting news is that we are expecting a new baby on October 4th!!! At this point we don't know if it is a boy or a girl - only that it is definitely a baby (not a bird dog or a beagle.) Each day I wake up with four of the most beautiful girls in the world, and I am reminded of how extravagantly good our heavenly Father is. Imagine, an old dude like me getting to be a daddy again. Praise God!

The Future...

Isaiah 55:9-11 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

What does the Lord have for Icthus Ministries in the near future? Of course HE knows completely, precisely, exactly what HE wants to do. The word I am hearing for this year is "increase." I believe the Lord is bringing the increase across the board. Edith and I are experiencing a greater hunger than ever before for more of God's presence. We want to see God do things in/through us that only HE can do. Obviously, we're seeing the "increase" in our family with the imminent arrival of our little one. We are seeing "increase" in our staff with Pat & Lonnie laboring along side us in great unity. We are seeing it in the number of groups we have already scheduled for this year (13 so far, as opposed to 17 all year last year!) We are seeing "increase" in the area of local ministry to the community through our "Praise Festival" & "Fun Day" events as well as everyday use of the rec. area by local youth & adults. All of this and more is evidence of God's rain that is bringing the "increase." I am also expecting to see a greater measure of protection, direction, and provision. I'd be very grateful if you'd pray with us in these areas.

Protection: We are well aware that there is an enemy. He is not pleased that there is territory being taken in our county (Swain) that is advancing the Kingdom of God. As the territory has "increased" through changed lives as well as physical land, so has opposition from the enemy. Although we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against powers, rulers, and authorities in high places, it is often "flesh and blood" that he (satan) uses to bring the conflict. Some of the persecution has come from neighbors, some from professing believers. Regardless of the source, we are encouraged by Jesus' statement in Mat. 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." I am believing God to rain down HIS protection from every attack from within and without.

Pray for: favor with neighbors and local officials.  
health/safety of us/ family/staff/guests

Direction: The scripture clearly says: "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain" Ps. 127:1. From the very first day the Lord spoke to me about overseeing Icthus Ministries, I have earnestly sought HIS will, HIS way, HIS direction through prayer, fasting, scripture, and Godly counsel. I have clearly seen God rain down HIS guidance over the last sixteen and one half years as HE has directed me, among other things, to come here, marry Edith, purchase the Haven property, and now to build a new retreat center. Two of the main ways the Lord has always confirmed HIS direction have been through HIS peace and HIS provision. We are in communication with a ministry that is interested in purchasing the old retreat center and are seeking the Lord's direction/timing in this matter.

Pray for clear direction for the present retreat center.

Provision: I have continually experienced the Lord's provision since inviting HIM to rule & rein in my life in 1974, but

especially so since coming to Icthus. I've seen HIM wipe out a twenty year mortgage on the current retreat center within three years and three months of moving here. HE has provided me with a wife waaaaaaaaaay out of my league and children with their Mama's intelligence and looks (Praise God!!!). By HIS provision, the original Haven property and every tract added (38 acres so far) thereafter have been purchased in cash, including a two bedroom house! HE has provided groups/individuals to labor with us from hours to years. HE has provided materials, tools and equipment to do the work. By HIS provision we have been debt-free, both personally (without a salary from 1991 to present) and in the ministry since 1994. We have never lacked for anything we needed. As Acts 14:17 says: "Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

One thing I have learned is that God's math is much different than the world's math! The world looks at the resources and says, "You only have enough for one lunch." Jesus says, "Give me your lunch," then He feeds well over 5,000 people with twelve baskets full of leftovers! I believe the Lord has said to ask HIM (not you) for three million dollars. I have no idea how HE will bring the provision, but I'm asking HIM to take my lunch (resources) and multiply them like only He can do.

Pray for God's provision of : three million dollars for new center, infrastructure, staff housing  
a manager to handle all phases of construction  
laborers, skilled & unskilled to do the work  
financial support for all staff  
heavy equipment; particularly a backhoe, small bulldozer, small dump truck

Want to Help???

1. Pray for us often.
2. Forward this letter to others that will pray with us (after you check your couch for an extra 3 mil. Better yet, check Bill Gates' couch).
3. If you know of groups that are looking for a place for a spring/fall retreat or a summer camp, send to our web site: [www.ictusministries.com](http://www.ictusministries.com) . We currently have June 1-3 & 9-12 open, and all of July except 9-13.
4. If God gives you a word for us, let us know.
5. If you have construction skills, come build a 30' X 60' maintenance shed for us.
6. If you have block laying skills, come finish our chimney at the pavilion.

Conclusion...

Often times before the rain comes, you can smell it, hear it, or see it in the distance. When it arrives you can also feel it and taste it. I pray in your own walk you are experiencing the Lord's rain; I pray that it is producing increase in your life and those around you. It looks like rain around here. Let it pour, Lord, let it pour. Blessings!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Trusting JESUS,  
Bill  
Prov.3:5-6  
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