

Icthus News July 2008

Hello to all, We've been running hard but I wanted to take a moment get you caught up on what is going on here at Icthus. As always, we'd love to hear from you personally with your news, prayer request, questions, etc., but please refrain from forwarding junk "luck" & "if you love Jesus, you'll send this to at least 5 people" kind of mail... now on with the news.

SLOW START

Although we officially opened March one, we didn't have our first group of the year until May 16, St Paul's United Methodist from Ridgland, SC. The leader was an old classmate that I haven't seen in over twenty-five years so the reunion was sweet and it was a great encouragement to spend a few days together & hear about his walk with the Lord.

We had another dry spell after hosting St Paul's and didn't get a chance to minister again until June 16 - July 6. During that 21 day stretch we saw 150 folks from Indian Trail, Wendell, & Cary, NC as well as Phenix City & Opelika, AL.

Since then we've shifted to weekend mode and hosted a youth group from Bennettsville, SC, a Father/Son group from Summerville, SC, and this weekend a mission group from Brighton, MI.

Even though visits & numbers are way down, I very happy to report that ministry is way up! Several have invited Jesus to be the Lord of their lives for the first time & most that already have a relationship with Jesus have gone back home with a desire to walk closer to HIM. It is amazing that when you strip away all the noise, cell phones, & busyness, how clearly people can hear God. We've received many encouraging letters & e-mails from youth & adults alike after they got back home relating how the Lord met them here & continues to meet them at home.

STAFF

Even though group numbers are down, the maintenance load is up. Lonnie & Pat are greatly missed this season. Lonnie married his sweetheart last August and moved to Redding, CA to enter the School of Ministry at Bethel Church. Pat moved back to Phenix City, AL in November and is currently living one of his life long dreams of working with a local veterinarian. To help fill the void, we felt led to ask Brandon Hinesley, also of Phenix City to join us on staff this season. Brandon has been here several times as a camper over the years & Edith & I sensed that the Lord wanted us to disciple this young man. Interestingly, Brandon had talked with Pat when he returned to Phenix City about his work here, and had been praying for several months asking the Lord if he could come serve at Icthus. God has a plan!

DEFINING MOMENTS

Defining moments occur here all the time. Whether it is an individual recognizing their need for a Savior for the first time, a light coming on as a student receives truth from God's word, someone over coming fear through any number of our challenge/teambuliding (white water, high ropes, caving, etc.) activities. It's one of those moments, usually when we least expect it, that God breaks through and our lives will never be the same.

I had one of those moments in July of 1990 at Icthus. I had heard that Dan & Naomi Cathey, the founders of Icthus Ministries were leaving. I didn't know why so I decided that I drive up and ask them face to face why they would leave such a great ministry. As I was driving down the interstate & praying that the ministry would continue, this thought dropped into my mind: "I wonder if I could do something like that."

Immediately I thought: "Get that out of there, that ain't my dream!" I was very comfortable where I was as a forest ranger in private industry; close to family, friends, good salary, lots of ministry opportunity... no need to leave all that for the unknown.

I continued to drive & pray and when I got to Icthus, sat down on the porch with Dan. He shared how God was calling them out to minister at a deaf church (Naomi was born deaf & they always had a heart for deaf ministry). At the same time, the owner of the facility (Dan was renting with the option to buy) had decided to sell it and clear out some debts before he retired. This would have been an eviction notice had the Lord not already called them out... Then came the defining moment that forever changed my life. It came within the first five minutes of our conversation. It was in the form of a "follow up" question: "Well, Brother Bill, did the Lord lead you up here to take over Icthus Ministries?" The rest is history. The answer to that question is still impacting my life (and others) eighteen years later.

So why write about "a moment" that happened so long ago? Anniversaries have a way of reminding us of "moments", events, etc., but this year was a bit different. A few weeks ago I got the news Dan had been diagnosed with stage four cancer. He decided against treatment. He was ready to go home. Naomi had succumbed to leukemia five years ago (on my birthday). Last Thursday the word came: "Dan is with the Lord." The impact that Dan & Naomi and their children, Belinda, Benita, & Sam have had on my life has been tremendous. Their love for Jesus and for people has always been an example to me. They always look for opportunities to share Jesus whether inside or outside the the four walls of a church building.

PRAY

Please pray for Belinda, Benita, Sam, their spouses & children as they morn their loss & rejoice over Dan's gain.

Pray for Protection/Favor. There have been some threats on Bill's life

Pray for more ministry opportunities/groups. We only have three more groups scheduled for the summer through Aug. 10. So far only one group is scheduled for Sept.-Nov. Help spread the word.

Pray for Provision: Finances/resources. The financial situation changed for last year's two largest donors (\$1500/month) & they are no longer able to give. We have 42 acres for sale around us that we'd like to add to the Haven (I've been praying for at least 100 acres). In addition we're still trying to raise funds for a new lodge & purchase/maintain equipment to keep everything going. All of this involves significant funds. It all seems out of reach, but many hands (partners) make light work.

Pray for Edith's Concert. See FYI below.

FYI

Edith will be giving concert Sunday 7/27/08. Press release & info below. If you're in the Bryson City area we'd love to see you. If you're interested in having her come play/sing at your church or would like to purchase her new praise & worship CD please contact us via e-mail or call; 828-488-0553 (hm) or 828-507-1315 (cell)

News Release: July 16, 2008

Piano and Vocal Concert by Edith Dingle

Followed by Artist Reception for Robin Swaby Miltner

By Eugenia L. Johnson, Director of Swain County Center for the Arts

Edith Dingle of Bryson City will perform a piano and vocal concert at Swain County Center for the Arts in Bryson City, NC, on Sunday, July 27, at 3:00 pm. The concert will include a medley of folk, Appalachian and Irish tunes along with some movie themes, a little jazz and selections from Edith Dingle's most recent CD of Christian music.

Immediately following the concert, there will be a reception for artist, Robin Swaby Miltner, of Franklin, NC, whose pastel paintings will be on exhibit through the end of July. The 46 framed paintings include mountain landscapes, coastal seascapes and boats, flowers and fowl. All of the artwork is for sale.

Sponsored by Swain County Center for the Arts and Swain County Schools, everyone is invited to attend this family oriented concert and reception free of charge.

Originally from Alabama, Edith Dingle has been living in Swain County for almost 14 years. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Piano Performance from the University of Montevallo in Alabama and a Master's Degree in Music Theory from the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. Since her early teen years, she has led worship in church and camp functions.

Edith married Bill Dingle in 1994 and joined him in Alarka to help minister at Icthus Ministries, a Christian Retreat Center that hosts all kinds of church groups from all the southeastern states. The Dingle's four children, Emma, Reah, Lydia Eve, and David range in age from 7 years to 9 months.

Before having children, Edith Dingle enjoyed volunteering in Swain County schools as a tutor in the GED program and with Hispanic children. She was also active as a piano teacher and an occasional performer. For the past ten years, she has volunteered at Grace Christian Academy as pianist for all of their special programs.

In the fall, Edith created a worship CD titled "Journey Back to Shalom," in reference to the many wonderful praise songs she learned as a child. She says she had some of the best times of her music career in Lands Creek Studio working with Johnny Floor. The CD was released in April and she performed the premier concert in Alabama on Passover. Since then she has performed at two additional churches. Her CD will be available at the concert and can also be purchased at several locations around Bryson City including Amazing Grace Christian Book Store in Alarka, Grace Christian Academy, Hemlock Inn, Bryson General, Nantahala Village and Appalachian Rivers Raft Co.

Edith Dingle says, "It has always been a privilege for me to bless others with the gift of music, whether in worship to our Creator, in the beautiful classics, or in fun tunes from our Irish and Appalachian descent. It is here, in Appalachia, that I hope to raise my family and live out my days in service to God and my neighbor."

Everyone is invited to attend both the concert and the artist reception free of charge. Bring your family to Swain County Center for the Arts on Sunday, July 27, at 3:00 pm to enjoy an eclectic mix of music by Edith Dingle. Meet the musician and the artist, Robin Swaby Miltner. Swain County Center for the Arts is located at Swain County High School, 1415 Fontana Road, Bryson City, NC 28713. For more information, call Jenny Johnson at 828-488-7843. Go to www.swain.k12.nc.us/cfta to view the current calendar of events or to get directions.

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Trusting JESUS,
Bill
Prov.3:5-6