

Icthus News

August 2009

Hello to everyone! We finished up our 19th summer camp season last Friday and are now shifting into “weekend” mode. Hopefully now that the number of groups are slowing down I’ll be able to shift to “half day” work days (12 hours is a half day). We saw the Lord do some great things & had a lot of fun so here are a few highlights...

THE NUMBERS:

1 Worship celebration with 150+ Families on Mission at the Haven
5 Mission teams, 30 people, 3 days
42 People, 57 days at the Red (Redemption) House
13 Groups, 354 people, 65 days at the retreat center

DETAILS:

This summer, the North American Mission Board hosted around 150 family members from across the southeast to come to the Bryson City Area to provide help/ministry to many residents and ministries for a three day period. The culmination of the event was a bar-b-que dinner/worship celebration at the pavilion at the Haven. It was wonderful to get a glimpse of what the teams accomplished and experienced during their three days of service. The five teams that I was responsible for cleared brush, cut wood, mowed, painted, cleaned house, etc. for some of our elderly neighbors. A team hosted a backyard bible club at the Haven for children in our community, another hauled rocks out of the creek for a fence around the rec. field, while others built a 28’ X 60’ form for the foundation of the maintenance shed that we plan to build this fall.

While this was going on, we were hosting two of the forty-two people that have used our ministry house, the Redemption or “Red” House so far this year. The Red House is a guest house we have set aside for ministers and their families to have a place to step back from the battle to be refreshed, renewed, and hear from God. It has been a great blessing to my family & me to have most of these dear saints around our table at some point during their visit. It is a beautiful picture for our children to see what true fellowship of the saints is.

Simultaneously, concurrently, at the same time (did I just repeat myself?) we were hosting one of the thirteen groups that stayed with us this summer. On top of being husband to my pregnant bride & daddy to three very active girls and a little boy that wants to ride in daddy’s big truck or the tractor every time I leave the house, it was a fairly busy week! Of the groups that came, two had never been here before (Crossroads Community Church & East Dillon Baptist.) One has come every summer for the last nineteen summers (Peace Presbyterian), and one, Auburn Heights Baptist, though they have skipped a year or two, has been here more that thirty times in the last nineteen years!

One of the perks of being at Icthus is the opportunity to build new relationships and continue old ones. This summer (and always) we had the great privilege to bring Jesus into each situation by opening God’s Word, praying with/for others, and singing praises. The setting was often different; sometimes on a hike, sitting in a raft, in the middle of a game, in the loft of the barn, in a dark cave or tunnel, in a den, or at the table. But Jesus was/is always the same. He came to give us abundant life, life to the max, if we will follow him with all of our heart. We witnessed the greatest miracle on the planet over twenty times as

others made the decision to give Jesus control of their lives. One picture I will always remember is that of a dad standing in the loft of the old barn leading his daughter in the “sinner’s prayer!”

THE STAFF:

God’s presence & provision was so evident during this time. Edith’s Mom & Dad came to help the last two weeks of May and all of June. Bethany Cochran joined us on staff for the summer, and John Edwards helped the last two weeks of May and all of July. We couldn’t have put together a better team. We are so thankful for a Father whose “divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.” 2 Pet. 1:3

These folks willingly came and worked long hours, day and night, with little sleep, and almost no time off. Often times we had a group leaving in the morning and the next group coming in the afternoon. They didn’t get paid for their efforts, (Icthus has no paid staff.) I never heard them grumble or complain, and never saw a bad attitude. As a matter of fact, after a stretch of 21 or 28 days of back to back groups we had one “break” of about 30 hours between groups. Instead of going and crawling into bed or doing something fun, Bethany & John insisted on keeping our kids so Edith and I could go on a date! I cannot describe to you how wonderful it was to have a meal, a walk, and several hours of uninterrupted conversation with my bride! It is one of the best gifts I have ever been given.

It is Edith’s and my pleasure to disciple/mentor our staff, and this summer was no exception. We had many candid conversations with Bethany & John as we lived life together. We were also able to squeeze in a twelve- part study entitled, “The Truth Project,” produced by Focus on the Family. It is a study of a complete, Christian world- view in the areas of philosophy, ethics, anthropology, theology, science, history, sociology, law, economics, labor, and a few others. I think Bethany & John are going back to Auburn and App. State with a different perspective as a result of the study. I recommend it to anyone of high school age or older.

FAMILY:

Back in June I wrote that Reah had a bike accident & broke her arm. I’m happy to report that it is healing well. After five weeks she got her hard cast off, and has been wearing a short splint. She has not missed a beat after the first night in the hospital, continuing to run, play, climb trees, etc. She is six and in the first grade. Emma, our oldest, turned eight yesterday (Aug 11), and has advanced to the third grade this summer. Lydia will be four on the 14th. She loves to do her school work, especially coloring. David is growing fast, starting to talk, and is all boy. He will be two next month. Edith is doing as well as any pregnant, home schooling, soon to be thirty-nine (Aug. 30) year old mom can be. I don’t know how she does it, she is amazing!

OPPORTUNITIES:

Here are some of the on- going projects that we have. If you are skilled/gifted in any of these areas & want to help, please contact us.

1. Finish prepping & pour 28’ X 60’ concrete slab for maintenance shed
2. Repair PTO drive on Toro Grounds keeper mower
3. Service all camp vehicles/equipment
4. Finish rock work around columns on rec. field fence
5. Finish rock work on chimney at pavilion
6. Repair concrete step at Red House

7. Repair storm door at Red House
8. Paint barn roof
9. Revamp our web site
10. Produce a video describing our ministry

INVATATION:

As I have prayed for provision/direction for the new retreat center at the Haven these last ten years, I keep remembering the account of Jesus feeding the 5,000 men (plus women & children.) John 6 tells us that a small boy brought five small loaves & two small fish. Peter's reaction was to comment on what was lacking. Jesus' reaction was to thank God for what He had.

This is what we have at the Haven:

1. A quality recreation field for soccer, softball, basketball, volleyball, & disc golf
2. A 20' X 40' pavilion w/fire place & grill for worship, sharing, & fellowship
3. A ministry house for ministers and their families to be refreshed & renewed
4. Barn with rustic chapel in the loft where numerous lives have been changed
5. Excavated site with water, power, & sewer for 10,000 sq. ft. retreat center
6. Excavated site for 28' X 60' maintenance shed
7. Excavated site for 4-5 bedroom double wide for staff housing/office space
8. 38 acres of woods, pastures, trails & roads to experience God's creation

It is easy to look at what is lacking and miss all that we have. I believe that things are shifting in our ministry and invite you to pray with us for:

1. **God's presence** to be so evident that even people driving by the area would be changed
2. **God's protection**... favor with God & man
3. **God's provision**... staff, finances, resources
4. **God's direction**... that everything would be done God' way & in God's time

Finally, ask the Lord if He would have you take Icthus to lunch. By that I mean consider sending what you'd spend on a meal as a gift, and spend that time praying for us. It may seem like such a small and insignificant amount, but remember the small boy that gave his lunch & impacted thousands. If everyone that has come here would do that once a month, I believe that we could build within a year. If you are not led to take Icthus to lunch, consider taking some other ministry to lunch. Many ministries are struggling financially at this time & could use your help. Here are a few quick facts:

1. Icthus is supported by campers, donations, T shirt/soda/gift sales (in that order)
2. A night at Icthus is cheaper than a tent site in the Smoky Mountain National Park
3. No one receives a salary from Icthus
4. To date Icthus has received gifts from 42 individuals/churches (rejoice in the 42!)
5. Of those 42, eleven give monthly (rejoice in the 11!)

We desire to be open and transparent in all that we do, and I am always glad to answer any questions you may have. Financial reports, both ministry & personal, are available upon request. Thank you for standing with us.

We still have several openings for the fall. If you are interested in scheduling a retreat, please call, write, e-mail, smoke signal, or drive- by. If you are doing the drive- by, we would appreciate it if you didn't bust any caps! Blessings!!!!!!!!!!

Trusting JESUS,
Bill
Prov.3:5-6
www.ichthusministries.com