

Icthus Ministries 2016 Newsletter

Hello to all you dear brothers and sisters in Christ! We hope you all had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Being the prolific (or not) writers that we are, it is past time for our annual newsletter. So grab a chair and let's get caught up on what the Lord has been doing here at Icthus and in our family this past year. As you read, please know that we are mindful of your contributions to the ongoing ministry here, and we are very grateful for how you participate in what God is doing!

Ministry

The number of groups that Icthus hosted in 2016 was somewhat leaner than in previous years, but God is **always** faithful. His presence was here, and many were ministered to. We hosted 428 people, in 16 different groups from Alabama, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Most of our groups (9) were youth/college students, and we hosted a retreat for women, men, Sr. adults, church staff, a worship team, and two work crews. Six students were baptized in the creek the first week of summer youth camp! Many youth and adults made commitments to go deeper in their walk with Christ.

Twenty-five ladies from Auburn Heights Baptist Church came in the spring with hungry hearts for the things of God. They arrived in the pouring rain and went straight to the barn for worship before unpacking the first thing! As the rain fell from the skies, the Holy Spirit poured from above, and the worship and fellowship was sweet. Their attitudes and actions opened up something in the Spirit that transferred over into the natural. As a result, the next group that came in benefited from the deposit that those ladies left. Six students chose to publicly commit their lives to Christ in baptism... here... in Alarka Creek. What an honor and privilege to witness! They left a deposit and the next group of students that came in spent the week learning what it means to be a disciple of Christ by pursuing the principles in Mathew 16:24-28: DENY, TAKE, FOLLOW. The week culminated with the students physically carrying a cross around the Haven property while reflecting on what Jesus accomplished/purchased for them on the cross. And on and on it went with each group receiving the benefit of what the previous group deposited in the Spirit. The camp season culminated with a huge outpouring on and through the last two groups. The first was a group of 70 men from the Charlotte area... sorta. Some came from Nashville, Charleston, Columbia, and various places. They didn't all know each other when they arrived, but they did when they left! I wish you could have heard those men declaring scripture with LOUD warrior voices bouncing off the mountains, and the sweet songs of praise flowing through the valley. I wish you could have seen them praying for and serving one another. It was something! If you have ever been here, you may be wondering where we put 70 men in our little retreat center. Some slept in tents by the creek, some slept in hammocks, some (most) slept in beds at the center, and some slept when they got home. Most importantly, they

pursued God with all of their hearts. As a result they left a spiritual deposit for the last group, precious students from Western Carolina University. They too came with a desire to draw close to the Lord and to encourage one another. The preparation before hand was obvious as various students shared God's word, wrote letters of encouragement, and fasted and prayed with/for their peers. On the final night, after a beautiful worship service focused on Christ serving His disciples at the last supper, eight students received the baptism of the Holy Spirit! But wait! That is not all... sandwiched right between these two groups we hosted our 17th Annual Praise Festival at the Haven. Every year on Oct. 31 we invite local churches and Christian ministries to come out and set up game booths, crafts, play praise music, videos with Godly themes, etc. to give families a safe, life-celebrating place to bring their children. This year we had about 300 people show up. Not only did they “have a good time”, lots of Bibles and gospel tracts were given out AND we know of one young man that asked Jesus to be his Lord and Savior! We rejoiced with the angels!

In addition to what was happening at Icthus, the Lord gave us the privilege of hosting 40 people at various times at the Haven House. The Haven House is our complimentary guest house set aside for ministers and their families, to give them a place of rest and refuge. Many times we have seen ministers and their families take a good long breath of relief as they enjoy the solitude of the Haven, and share their burdens with a brother and sister. It is so exciting to be a part of the work of restoration and healing. We ask you to remember this in prayer, that God's presence will continue to be poured out on all that come to Icthus.



Left: Smiling Faces at Camp

Above: Baptism in the Creek

Family

What a joy it is to be in the family of God. And how thrilling to see your children embrace this same family. Because of Jesus we all have the same Father and God. This past summer our last son, Elijah, was baptized in the creek! He actually asked to be baptized in February, but Edith asked to wait for above-freezing temperatures! It was an action-packed year, as people with children well understand. Here are a few highlights for each member.

Emma – played spring ball as a second baseman, shot her 1st turkey, went on a 500 mile bicycle trip in Colorado, ran cross country with the highschool and contributed to her team's score in the state championships with a time of 23:59 for the 5K, acquired her learner's permit to drive, and held a part-time job at the local bakery! Whew!

Reah – continued private flute lessons, played her last season of softball as an excellent third baseman, was prescribed glasses for near-sightedness, completed a summer sports challenge from Focus on the Family, started full-time attendance to the public middle school with all A's, and danced with her youth worship team at the Christmas service.

Lydia – also played rec league softball and enjoyed her first trial as a first baseman, won first place in the art contest held by the Swain Soil and Water Conservation, won first place and best of show in the 4H Heritage Arts Contest, had several pieces displayed in the Fine Arts Center for local artists, and had an extraordinary blast learning to care for goats and a cow.

David – completed the second grade with all A's, grew out of all his clothes, had an excellent season of baseball with an 800 batting average, learned to butcher a deer with his dad, and loved shooting targets with his dad and going biking at Deep Creek with his mom.

Elijah – enjoyed drawing about 400 pictures of Super Mario, lost five teeth, finished kindergarten, got baptized, told jokes to his family, and ate a lot of Friday night pizza!

Bill and Edith are very blessed to have the gift of these five children! Sometimes the burden of it all – ministry, family, guests, farm animals, etc. is a little heavy. Until we remember His burden is light, and that Jesus' advice was to take it one day at a time. We continue to trust God for His protection, provision, and direction concerning Icthus and our family. We also are asking for His will as far as help/staff. We love all of you and would be very happy to hear from you. May God bless you with His lovingkindness, peace, and joy in this new year!





Dave the Slugger - Age 9



Emma's BikeAcrossAmerica Trip - Age 15



Elijah on Alarka Cr. - Age 7



Lydia with Red Shouldered Hawk - Age 11



Reah at Band Concert - Age 13