

Bethel-Mayland Hosts Adult Vacation Bible School

Although returning to pre-pandemic normal after fourteen months of mandatory lockdowns, masking and social distancing seems unlikely, some congregations have welcomed the new, creative programming borne in the crucible of adversity. Bethel-Mayland is one of those congregations.

Renewed interest in studying the Bible gave rise to a recent Bible Conference for adults and teens, which according to Pastor Larry Aikens, "... was well received and attended." He noted, "We averaged about 60 each evening, and the spirit of fellowship was tremendous."

The conference ran from July 31 through August 2 and included opportunities to eat together. A carry-in meal was served on Sunday night, and it was "delicious," he reported. On Monday and Tuesday evenings, the dinners were "... catered to ease the workload on our generous and wonderful ministers," Aikens said. Afterward, while Bible study engaged the older youth and adults, the children were free to play on the church's playground under adult supervision.

On Sunday, the first night of the three-day event, "... the Timberville Fire Company sent over one of their newest fire trucks and gave rides to any takers," Aikens said. Church member Steven Layman "... has 45 years with the fire company, and he drove the truck and orchestrated" the special feature, he added.

Billed initially as a Vacation Bible School for adults, the 7 p.m. services began with "... a rousing chorus of 'It's a Grand Thing to Be a Christian.' Then we had a time of centering prayer and then a time of intercessory prayer using Katy Nichole's song, 'In Jesus' Name, God of Possible' as a guide for our prayers," he said.

Mark Chapman from Jakin, Georgia, was the special guest speaker. He presented the children's story through a technique known as Gospel Magic, which uses magic tricks and illusions to convey Christian messages. "It was a real highlight of each evening," said Aiken. In addition, Chapman taught the adults from "The Exodus and lessons that we as Christians can glean from a few of those happenings," he noted.

To round out the evening, corporate singing of the worship song "As the Deer" prepared hearts for Bible study. The children were allowed to go to the playground under the supervision of Aikens. Middle Schoolers and older youth participated in the teen Bible study. He ensured everyone finished by 8 p.m. sharp.

Aikens has "... heard a lot of very good feedback" on the conference. Comments such as "Oh man. Mark was right on for us tonight. We left there in tears," and "I haven't picked up a Bible in the past year. This Conference made me pick up a Bible and study again" were just two examples of "the powerful comments" received, he said.

As Aikens reflected on the Bible Conference, he said, "Overall, it seemed like a very good event around the Word of God."

(Editor's note: This article first appeared in The Shenandoah Update on August 10, 2022, under the title, "The Church in the Aftermath of a Pandemic." It was the first in a series looking at how congregations are rebounding after the COVID-19 outbreak.)

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