

Day Camp Stories – Jack and the Chapel in the Pines

June 2022

Day 1

After a whirlwind morning of swim tests, parachute playing, nature walks, and creating bead necklaces, the Nature Camp kids and staff shared their first warm lunch brought to the rafters by Matt and Lin. During lunch I met each child to see who had permission to attend Bible Study. More than half of the children were on the list. The staff had been keeping an eye on a 12 year boy named “Jack” who had been pushing boundaries that first day. The Program Director said that I could ask Jack to join the Bible Study, and his family had said he could make the choice. So I talked to Jack and he asked what we were going to do and then said, “OK, I’ll go.”

Two junior counselors, Maddison and Addison, gathered the group together and we all walked to a shady spot in the Chapel in the Pines. We learned a song, and then Addison read the story of Genesis from the SPARKS bible. The children talked about things that they saw in creation, and then one child asked, “What is the cross for?” This opened up a slew of questions from the children about Jesus: Who was he? Where was he born? Why did he die? Is Jesus’ last name Christ? Did Jesus have a middle name? Very quickly, we were talking about the resurrection, Jesus’ tremendous love for us, and even the Holy Trinity. Their curiosity and questions were intense and beautiful. Jack was fully engaged, and I could tell that somehow a weight had been lifted from him.

Day 2

The next day Nature Camp was visited by a mother bear and cubs who were trying to get away from a large male bear. Matt came down and helped chase the male bear so the Mama would move along. The counselors and the kids spent the morning at the beach, and we sang bear songs and read bear books and made bear puppets out of paper bags. They were just fine. Jack came up to me to ask if we were going to Bible Study again and I said yes. We read the Genesis story again and then the children made creation poems in small groups. Jack’s group was the only poem that rhymed, and he recited proudly it with a partner.

Day 3

When we began to gather at the chapel to start the day, Jack sat near me with a few other children. He remembered his poem and recited it to me again by heart. He asked if this place was a church. I said yes, and pointed out the lectern, the altar, and the place for baptisms. I told him that we have church on Sundays in the Chapel during the summer. A child next to him said that she couldn’t go because every weekend we go camping. “So do we,” said Jack, “But that is going to have to change.” During Bible study we asked the children to draw a picture of the story, which we then shared with the group. We thought we might make a book, but many children wanted to bring their pictures home, so at the end of the day we gave them that choice.

I wonder if by the end of the summer we will have some local families attending church the Chapel in the Pines, encouraged to come by kids like Jack. I wonder if Jack one day will become a pastor. What I do know is that this week Koinonia’s mission was brought to life through Jack: God is transforming people in an outdoor environment to love and serve one another.