

Christian Education at BHCC

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*God.
God is.
God is love.
Love God.
Love one another.
For love is of God.
And God is love.*

God's love: As a learning, growing and serving community, this is what we strive to know, to experience, to believe, and to live out in our world. And over the course of this year there was ample evidence of God's love as the Spirit moved among, within, and through us.

From the youngest among us to the oldest, learning about God, God's love for his people and for this world, and how that impacts us personally and collectively, is at the very heart of our Christian education and spiritual formation at BHUCC. We are ever inspired and challenged to live out God's love through the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth. Significant relationships are created and shaped as we learn and grow through weekly Sunday classes and children's sermons, midweek events and Friday Night Grace, outings and pilgrimages, retreats and service opportunities. Finding support, encouragement and joy for the journey is evidence of the Spirit with us.

Whether we had two or twenty-two children and youth in Sunday school on any given week, the scriptures were read, life was shared, and love grew. There were also plenty of prayers, paint and play doh! Many thanks to Betsy Wright-Higgins, Beth Paradis and Cindy Fox who shared their wisdom and gentleness as they taught along with me. Our youngest were well tended by our nursery staff throughout the year, which included Susan Aripotch, Mari Strandoo-Rodin, Sara Todd and Julia Hendricks. What a gift to have such warm and gentle women tending our children!

God's love was equally evident in our Confirmation class of thirteen 8th & 9th grade students as they were faithfully led by Cristy Benson and Mimi deVries. As they met week to week over the course of nearly two years, these confirmands grew in understanding, friendship and commitment to their faith as they studied, questioned, created, served, prayed, laughed, listened, ate (a lot!) and shared bread and cup. The Confirmation process culminated in baptisms for Callan, Mia and Zoë Eason, Anwen and Hallie Hudson, and Ben Weed, and a

service of confirmation on Sunday, May 12th which also included Jacob Benson, Callahan and Avery Bryer, Whit and Sannah Chaplin, Sam Craighead and Julian Cullen. What a joyous day! These new church members now join our other high school age students in the worship service and are frequently seen participating as readers, ushers, acolytes and communion servers. We look forward to witnessing their lives unfold and commit to supporting them on their faith journey, wherever it may lead them.

In June, following up on our fantastic summer book from the previous year, "Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy," eighteen from the church and community made our way to Phippsburg and then to Malaga Island by kayak to spend time on the sacred ground and reflect and remember the Malaga people, who were forced to leave their peaceful island home due to greed and racism. Many thanks to Bob Chaplin for his thoughtful and expert guidance. A very meaningful and memorable day.

Our most recent summer book "Outcasts United" opened our eyes and hearts to the experience of refugees as we read the true story of the Fugees, all-refugee soccer team in Georgia. These intergenerational summer reads and the ensuing discussion have fostered deeper connection, conversation and insight into important social and spiritual concerns.

"The Sermon After Party" on the last Sunday of each month offers opportunity for primarily adults to gather and continue to reflect and converse on the sermon of the day, sharing questions and struggles while deepening in knowledge and relationship. An Advent Quiet Day mini retreat offered much needed space for peace and preparation in the midst of the season.

A cherished tradition of the Sunday school - the Festive Christmas Extravaganza (aka the Christmas Pageant) - presented a (non-operatic) version of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" for the congregation in mid-December. Written and directed by Cindy Fox, our children shared a simple and beautiful performance which concluded at the nativity. We all agreed that baby Luke as the baby Jesus stole the show and brought the miracle of God's love among us home to each of us in a very special way. We couldn't have scripted that if we tried!

And that's what so much of our life together is like, isn't it? We plan and show up and offer a container for learning and growing, but it's the unscripted moments when the Spirit moves and we find ourselves witnessing God-with-us and God's love at work among us. What more could we hope for?

May blessings abound!

René