

Towson Presbyterian Church

Reflections from Camp Bee Tree 2018

July 15, 2018

Sarah Martin

Good Morning, my name is Sarah Martin and I'm going to be a junior at Dulaney High School. I am a member at Havenwood Presbyterian Church. I have been going to Camp Bee Tree since probably third grade. I was once a little camper that could not wait to be a CIT.

This is my 4th year of being a CIT and I was helping at the stream station which was high action. Kids were telling US the safety rules so they could get into the water faster. Kids caught monster crayfish and even a baby snapping turtle. Although there may have been a dead raccoon in the middle of the NCR trail for 3 days, that didn't stop any campers from making it to the stream. The campers would always sit patiently on the ledge to listen for rules because safety is always a number one priority. Then the campers would grab a net and start searching for any critters they could catch. I will not miss, suffering for 3 days with the nasty raccoon smell.

Throughout my week at the stream, I saw kindness among campers, CIT's, and adults. We did not have enough CIT's at the stream so Olivia gladly joined the Stream Team for the day instead of making snowballs for campers. I saw a camper who spotted a crayfish and then decided to let another camper who had not caught a crayfish try to catch it. I saw counselors being patient with campers that may take longer to walk the mile to the stream or campers who needed help putting on their water shoes. I saw many CIT's hold camper's hands to help guide them on the slippery rocks. There were so many signs of God's kindness among everyone at the camp.

On Friday, we have a boat launch which takes place at the stream. The campers decorate their boats and have a candle inside. We light the candles and the boats slowly start to float down the stream. I believe that the water is like God and the boat is you. The boat may get stuck on a rock, but you will overcome that obstacle with God's help. Your candle may get blown out on the journey, but others will show kindness and help relight your candle. Your boat may go down the wrong path, but you will learn from your mistakes and be redirected. Your boat may take on water and start to sink, but God keeps us afloat with his love.

Camp Bee Tree is always a week full of family, friends, and memories made. Camp Bee Tree is a special place for God to share nature's beauty.

Jane Chinn

Good Morning. I'm sure you've heard about people known as "winter birds" who fly south to warmer climates to escape the cold. Well, I'm a "summer bird" and I migrate from the cool temperate San Francisco Bay Area where my home is to spend the hot summers in Maryland. My daughter and son-in-law have built their nest here and so I come to spend time with them and my two granddaughters. This is my second summer in Towson and my second time serving with Camp Bee Tree. My granddaughter, Mia, has attended Camp Bee Tree for three years and because she loved the program so much I thought I would check out the church sponsoring this really cool program. So I started attending here whenever I was in town. My home church is First Presbyterian Church of Hayward so if you come to the Bay Area, please come and visit.

I served as a camp counselor for the first time last year on the first day of camp I was feeling a bit nervous. I picked up my granddaughter Mia at her home and on the drive over to the church she asked me, "Nana, do you love Jesus?" I answered, "Yes." She said "Then you're going to love Camp Bee Tree." That made my heart glad and I knew it was going to be a special week. And it was. I was so impressed watching the children learn about Jesus my rock in such a beautiful setting. When I knew I would be here this summer I started sending emails to the church in March or April asking if I could serve again.

So this is my second year and I am delighted that my other granddaughter Zoe decided to come too. My prayer on the first day was to regard each child in my group as an individual and not just collectively as the red team. I also hoped to experience camp from a child's point of view and become a little more child-like myself. I really enjoyed learning a little about each child in my group. Each morning we started out our day by writing something related to one of the fruits of the spirit on colorful paper cut-outs of fruit. These were posted on a giant heart. Here are some of the things they shared:

Thankfulness: Many were thankful for family, friends and pets. One was thankful for mac and cheese

Peace: Peace is being with my family. Peace is good. Peace is having a bike ride. I feel peace at telling tent.

Kindness: A friend helped me with word search. A friend picked up my hat. My nana was kind to me.

Faithfulness or how has being at camp helped your faith: I can see Jesus in all my friends. Being at church and going to the stream.

Here are some of my own experiences and observations of the fruit of the spirit at Camp Bee tree

Joy: children in the stream spontaneously singing the songs we were learning.

Peace: The stillness of the woods and the gentle breezes.

Patience and Self-Control: Children politely waiting in line for their snow balls.

Kindness: I experienced kindness from the leaders and teachers who welcomed me.

Goodness: I saw goodness in the church garden, growing food for the community. The children learned how food is grown and that God wants us to share with those who are hungry.

Faithfulness: I saw faithfulness in all the leaders and teachers, who were steadfast and cheerful throughout the week. A special shout-out goes to all the awesome CITS who brought such enthusiasm to each day. Special thanks to our red group CIT Brayden Lopez.

Gentleness and Love: I saw the CITs giving gentle hugs, braiding hair and just having fun with each child.

Part of my goal to become more child-like was to just have some fun with the kids and we did. We know from Genesis that God gave man the task of naming the animals and so we did too. Along the way to the stream, we met Bob the turtle, Philip the earthworm, son of Philip, two fish and one crayfish named Donald, Ronald, and MacDonald and poor Rocky the Raccoon, may he rest in peace. And then there's Reggie the alligator who lives in the stream. Next time you visit Bee Tree stop at the second bridge on the way to the stream, peer over railing with the eyes of a child and look for Reggie, you just might see him.

Although our days at camp were full, I was able to take a few quiet moments for myself in the woods. I am thankful for this time of refreshing to be in God's creation and leave behind the constructs of man, politics, and the inevitable cynicism that can come with all that. I have two special verses that I hide in my heart: Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God." And Acts 17:25 " . . . he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else." I would recall these verses, take a few deep cleansing breaths and I felt renewed.

Finally I want to mention one of the outstanding qualities of Camp Bee Tree that I so appreciated last year and, again, this year is and that is the gentle pace of the day. Yes we had our daily schedules, but there was plenty of time and space to move from one activity to another without feeling rushed. There was time to pal around with friends, make up your own games, and freedom to act a little goofy. I did not see any stressed out kids. To learn about God in this relaxed nurturing environment is a really good thing.

On the last day of camp we had some beautiful cumulus clouds roll in and they always remind me that Jesus is coming again on clouds of glory. But I know that until he returns, Jesus wants us to be occupied with the work he's given us. That is what we have done this week at Camp Bee Tree. We have been about the Lord's business. I am blessed to have been a part of it. Thank you.

Will Buchanan

Good morning everyone, my name is Will Buchanan, and I am going into my freshman year at St. Paul's this fall. Today I will be talking to all of you about how Camp Bee Tree was another great year of being a CIT for me, and how I felt that the experience really brought me closer to God. The campers made waking up early in the morning totally worth it; they were all so happy to be there, and it was evident in their attitudes.

On Monday I got to be a part of the yellow group, which consisted of first and second graders. Because I was a CIT the year before, I recognized some of the campers, and they remembered me too. It felt really good to know that the campers had taken time to remember my name, and it made me feel like I wasn't just a camp counselor for them, but a friend. After Monday, I worked at the telling tent station, where I got to help the campers dress up in fun costumes and put on shows from biblical times. It was fun to help the kids grow in their faith, and we had quite a few future stars on our hands.

The theme for this year was "Food Faith, and Friends." We went over stories that involved food such as the story of feeding the five thousand, and the last supper. We even had a mock communion on Thursday, where we dipped bread into grape juice. The campers also really embraced the theme, and treated each other with kindness, love, and respect. Even though I wasn't the CIT of a group, I still felt that I really got to know each and every one of the campers. I got to lead them in a few songs along with other CITs, and the enthusiasm that they sang and danced with was contagious. Whether I was giving a piggy back ride to the first graders, or going down the water slide on Friday with the fifth graders, I was always having a good time.

Camp Bee Tree will always be a special place to me, because I have been going there since I was little, but even though this was my 8th year, it was still just as great as I remembered. I will always feel close to God at Camp Bee Tree, and it will always have a place in my heart.