

New Hope UMC Steps Back In Time To 12 AD Nazareth

By Patricia Walker Murphy, writing staff of NH UMC

This year the Vacation Bible School (VBS) theme at New Hope United Methodist Church (UMC) in Hertford, NC, was *Hometown Nazareth – Where Jesus Was A Kid*. Forty-nine children attended this ultimate Bible-times experience plus there were approximately 30 helpers comprised of New Hope United Methodist Youth and adults.

Each day, during the week of July 11th through July 15th, the children and adults traveled back in time over 2,000 years ago to the dusty town of Nazareth. This is where Jesus lived and was raised by his parents. A great time was had by all as they could actually see, hear, touch and even taste what it was like to live during Jesus' time. They explored authentic Nazareth Marketplace shops; Visited Mary, Jesus' mom and heard about Jesus' childhood adventures; Took part in games; Danced to lively Bible songs; Collected Bible Memory Makers to remind them of God's Word; Looked for evidence of God all around them through God Sightings and; Sampled tasty tidbits as they learned more about the Bible. Each day concluded at Celebration, which was a time of upbeat worship where everyone was involved. These experiences made God's Word come alive with new meaning for all who participated.

After the meal kids and adults started the evening by gathering for Celebration—an upbeat worship time of



songs and activities! Next they joined their different Tribes (small groups) for interaction in a Hometown Huddle. There were six Tribes: Benjamin, Gad, Joseph, Judah, Levi, and Reuben. During this small-group time, Tribes prepared to step back in time to visit Nazareth—where Jesus was a kid. And each child was given a few “shekels” to spend in the Marketplace.

VBS began each evening at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall with a delicious meal. This Evening everyone feasted on BBQ and hot dogs. Kathy and George Brizius, New Hope UMC's Nazareth chiefs for the week cooked for over 100 people each evening. The United Methodist Men took care of the cost for food.



After the meal the children gathered in their different “Tribes”, sang about God's love, learned Bible points, and prepared for their travels through Nazareth.

“Hometown Nazareth was really well put together and very well run. I love the family concept and the way the evenings were scheduled. VBS provided us with the opportunity to interact with families we never see. We have a follow-up plan for all of the children that attended VBS,” said Rev. Ed Rutenkroger, pastor of New Hope UMC.

He went on to say, "We gave each child a bag that contained a Bible, New Hope UMC brochure, and a letter inviting them and their families to attend Sunday School and worship with us. The letter is from the Director of VBS, Lindsay Chambers and me. This is more about the invitation than the response."



Once Hometown Huddle was over the Tribes explored the bustling Bible-times market place shops where they: built a tzedakah (charity) box; made wooly toy sheep; at the Rock Quarry they dug for stones, wrapped them in cord and then wore the stones; visited the Olive Oil Shop; petted real animals at the Barnyard; and sampled unexpected snacks. They also visited Mary's house to hear what life was like for Jesus as a kid.

Once Hometown Huddle was over the children headed to the Fun & Games area where they laughed and played. The children are stomping grapes (actually the grapes are balloons filled with water). They loved it as the temperature was in the 90's.

Gracie, one of the children attending VBS said, "I really had a lot of fun. I liked visiting with Mary because she taught us a lot of things about Jesus. I learned that nothing is impossible with God. I want to come back next year." Her younger sister Rubie added, "I just liked everything. It was lots of fun! Did you know that anything is

possible with God?"



Corey, a New Hope United Methodist Youth worker said, "The children learned about the history of Jesus Christ and what he did. The Marketplace Shops were really fun to work with as there were so many different themes. I had a nice time working in VBS and I really enjoyed the food. But, it was hot working outside. We saw several plays that were very interesting. It was great to see the doves as they were released and flying away each evening. The kids really enjoyed it. It's fun to hang out with your friends and talk about Jesus. We try to help out with VBS as much as we can."

Pastor Ed Rutenkroger as a Rabbi at the Synagogue School teaching the children how to assemble and decorate tzedakah boxes to use when collecting money for the poor. The boxes can actually be used as banks.

Gerri White said, "I think this VBS program has been very good educationally not only for the children's religious education but education in everyday life experiences. The children have received a good background on Jesus and what he went through for us. This has been wonderful as it has brought children not only from this church but from the community and outside of the New Hope community to the church. If we can reach only one child we've done a great job."



New Hope UMC, Hometown Nazareth Vacation Bible School participants, tribe leaders, helpers, & parents.

Don Oglesby felt "The activities were wonderful. The children were very creative in making the various items at the booths. Pat and I were shopkeepers involved in jewelry making and beading. We watched the children pick



out certain beads and organize them by color and symmetry...very creative. There were also shops that made banks and the carpentry booth was making little sheep which the children loved. This was a great experience for the children and for the adults it was a wonderful teaching opportunity."

Don and Pat Oglesby are teaching the children about beading in Nazareth over 2,000 years ago.

Each day the children visited Mary's House. The children listened as Mary (Sharon Darnell) told stories about her son Jesus, of her time in Nazareth, and her talks with Eunice (Anne Chambers), a non-believer. Kim Cullipher said her oldest daughter told her that was the real Mary. Kim told her daughter, "No, it's not the real

Mary the ladies are just portraying biblical characters.” She went on to say, “I’ve bragged about New Hope’s VBS all week. It’s excellent.”

Anne Chamber who portrayed Eunice said, “Each time we have a VBS I think it’s the best and it is, thanks to the hard work of Lindsay Chambers who pulled everything together, to Jenny Eure the VBS Celebration Leader, to Sally Morgan who directed the children through the wonderful praise songs, to all of the shopkeepers, and to George and Kathy Brizius for the great food. The children have really enjoyed themselves.”



Each evening the children encountered the tax collector (Phillip Darnell) and many other characters during “real life” dramas that took place in the marketplace. The children were given a few shekels to spend on a snack and to learn a craft while in the marketplace.



Also in the evening, to everyone’s delight, the woodworking shopkeeper, Lee Stallings released pigeons.

Before finishing the day, kids and adults returned to Hometown Huddle. They talked about the daily Bible Point and connected Mary’s story with their own lives. The first day’s Bible Point was: Jesus had a family...we do too. The Bible Verse was “For nothing is impossible with God” ~Luke 1:37.

Each day ended with a Closing Celebration where the children sang songs and listened to announcements to get ready for the next night. Each night they also paused for “God Sightings.” During this time children were encouraged to think of evidences of God...some of the sightings were: a sunset, music, God, pasta, Mary giving Eunice grain, learning that Jesus was a kid just like us, hugs, and friends. The children wrote the sightings on

paper and during each Closing Celebration, the Tribal Leaders helped the children post them on the wall that was a monument to honor the One True God.



Sally Morgan leading the children and tribal leaders in praise.



The children are placing items that they brought from home, in the baskets for the New Hope UMC Food Pantry.

Missions were emphasized during this year's VBS. The children brought in canned goods each day for the New Hope UMC Food Pantry. The children brought in 367 canned and boxed items and collected \$184.25.

VBS Family Sunday took place on July 17th and began with a donut celebration in the Fellowship Hall because the children exceeded the goal of 200 canned goods for the Food Pantry. After donuts everyone entered the sanctuary for the VBS program. The children sang VBS songs and talked about what they had learned. An offering was taken for the Food Pantry. All of the children received certificates of attendance.



Lindsay Chambers the Director of the Children's Ministry and VBS said, "What an amazing time we had this year. The children who attended Hometown Nazareth VBS learned what it was like to grow up as Jesus did. They learned that he had much the same experiences that they do today, that he had a name, parents who loved him, a house, and a church where he went to pray. It proved to be a very memorable and exciting time for everyone."

Lindsay went on to say, "My thanks to the many volunteers, shop keepers, and tribe leaders. These people went above and beyond to make this year's VBS a total success. This could not have been accomplished without each and every one of them. Thank you!"

Lindsay Chambers, VBS Director

New Hope UMC is located at the corner of New Hope and Woodville Road in Hertford, North Carolina. For more information about New Hope UMC's upcoming events and programs visit their website at www.nhumc.info or contact Pastor Ed Rutenkroger, OSL at 252-799-7499.