

Setting a Course

FOR NEW BELIEVERS

When 2020 began, no one knew what kind of a year it would be. The children's ministry at **Hyland Heights Baptist Church** in Rustburg, VA certainly had to adapt over and over as various challenges came up.

"In such a year, we would have never expected God to move in the manner in which He did," said children's pastor, Mike Summy. In 2020, 29 children followed through with believer's baptism.

"Children made decisions for Christ through our weekly programming, summer camp, and various other ministry activities," said Summy. "Watching God move, despite the changes in our normal programming and not having services for nearly three months, was amazing. I am so grateful for His work."

The movement in the children's ministry brought about the development of a "new believers" class for the children who were saved and baptized in 2020. These new believers attended a four-week class that was designed to teach them the basics of

faith. The class began with a discussion of who God is and why that matters to mankind.

Topics included why the students were in the class, what it means to be a new believer, why it is important to be baptized, and what baptism represents in the life of a new Christian. The class prioritized the importance of having a relationship with God and that the Bible is God's written Word for all creation—the ultimate source of information about God and our relationship with our Creator.

Closing out the lessons came the explanation of what it means to have the Holy Spirit impact who we are and that it is our responsibility to live on mission and spread the Word of God to all of humanity.

Of the 29 invited to attend, 25 were present at least one of those weeks, and 23 children completed the class and graduated.

"This class meant a lot to me," said parent Lindsay Donaruma. "It helped my daughter understand what it means to be a new believer and gave her the tools to help her grow in her walk as a Christian."

The class gave parents a mission as well. "Karlee was able to learn more about the seriousness of the decision she made and what she needed to do to grow in her relationship with Christ," said parent Kim Altizer. "At the end of the new believers class, we (as her parents) were also challenged with the responsibility that we have to continue to cultivate her new relationship with Christ."

The momentum that began in 2020 has continued into 2021. So far, into the first three months of the year, Hyland Heights has seen 20 children baptized and has scheduled a new believers class to begin in early summer. Needless to say, Summy is thrilled. "God is moving, and it is exciting to see what He is doing!" ■

