



December, 2016

Greetings!

My name is Beth Ann Maier and I am Chairperson of the Board of Camp Agape Vermont. Here is a vignette from this summer that I think illustrates the unique moments of love and connection that a week of summer camp makes possible.

As the camp was gathering for the final Fireside of the middle school camp week, twelve year old Tom (all fictitious names) was all charged up, and shot a karate chop into the night that connected with thirteen year old Peter's face. Now Peter had been dealing pretty well all week with the impulsive and irritating Tom. Usually he could laugh or turn away, but Peter was in pain, worn out, angry, and sad that camp would be ending the next day. He had reached his limit. He could screech out an obscenity, he could plant his fist in Tom's face, or he could turn around and run. He chose to run - into the dark night. Christian, a sixteen year old Bethany Birches Camp counselor-in-training, ran after him, and, because we are very serious about never having one camper alone with one staff person, I ran after both of them. I found them some distance away, sitting in the bushes on the hillside, quietly talking. I stayed back, and heard Christian ask: "Do you mind if I pray for you?" Peter responded angrily: "I don't need your sympathy. I don't want your pity!" "That's not what it's about," said Christian. "It's about strength and courage, and I need it as much as you do." And that is what they prayed for before they quietly got up and returned to Fireside.

The single guiding mission of Camp Agape Vermont is for God's totally accepting, unconditional love, to be experienced by children who have a parent in prison. This summer, Camp Agape supported 55 campers at Bethany Birches Camp in programs tailored for their needs. These children have a 75% risk of being in prison someday themselves, and what better way is there to reduce that risk than for them to know that they are loved and valued by God and their community?

May we continue to find strength and courage in our partnership as we accompany each other in God's grace and love.

Thank you and Merry Christmas

Beth Ann Maier, the Board of Camp Agape Vermont, and the children of Camp Agape

