Devotional Guide for the Easter Season

“Girls Only” Campers
Thank you for joining us on this journey of prayer for the **Camp Fontanelle “Branching Out Capital Campaign”**. The devotions that you will read each day during the Easter Season, the “50 Great Days” from Easter to Pentecost, have been written by persons of all ages who have seen or experienced the lifechanging impact that the ministry of Camp Fontanelle has had. Heeding the words of Jesus to “Go and make disciples” and led by the Holy Spirit, we are stepping out in faith to expand that ministry through the building of a new retreat center.

Each weekday there will be a personal testimonial by someone who has seen God’s power to touch and change lives through Christian Camping as well as a scripture and a prayer. (Please note that the prayers written after the author’s name have been written by another contributor.) The weekend readings will offer a prayer activity that often includes connecting with nature. We are so grateful for every person who has taken the time to share their stories, thoughts and testimonies. We know that you will find them to be very inspiring. And we are so grateful for your prayers. We know that “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1) We seek to be faithful to the Lord’s leading in every aspect of this campaign.

Blessings,

Charlotte Abram, Tom Ashby, Anne Kallesen and Gary Spivey
The Prayer/ Devotional Team
April 01, 2018

Easter Sunday Morning

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 12 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). 17 Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” 18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. John 20:11-18 (NIV)

Guided Meditation (Please read through before beginning)

Sitting straight up with your feet flat on the floor, take a few slow, deep breaths.

Now imagine you are in the Garden that 1st Easter morning.
Feel the moist grass under foot
...feel the gentle breeze
...smell the fragrant scent of the flowers
...feel the warmth of the sun’s rays as it rises

Now imagine that Jesus greets you there just as he greeted Mary. Take your time and listen to him...and tell him what is in your heart.

Now as the scene changes imagine your favorite place at Camp Fontanelle or in nature.
Take in the smells, sights and sounds.
And imagine Jesus suddenly meeting you there as well.
Speak your heart’s desire to him and listen as he responds.

Linger there with Jesus as long as you like.

As your visit comes to a close take a few deep breaths.

When you are ready, open your eyes slowly.

Offer Jesus your praise and thanksgiving
Journal, pray, sing or dance in response.
April 2, 2018
Thank You for Going First

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses[b] of these things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Luke 24:45-49 (NRSV)

The time had come…I couldn’t put it off anymore. I couldn’t go around it…over it…or under it. I had to go through it…total knee replacement surgery that is.

When I realized I was facing what I considered the unknown, I sought out folks who had gone through it before. In essence…they had gone first. They had already had the operation and could tell me about it. It’s not unusual to want to know what an experience will be like before we go though it ourselves. I like people to go first to see a movie or read a book and tell me if it’s worth my time…or try a strange looking dish on the buffet table to see how it tastes.

Jesus went first into this thing we humans call death. And praise be to God, Jesus was the first to go through death to the other side of life and come back again. Yet Jesus did not pick up his old life…but rather he entered into…and opened to us…an entirely new form of life…eternal life. Through the power and grace of God, Jesus goes first and led the way.

Ephesian 1:19 says: ‘I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in heaven,”

Wow! The same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead…is the power available to help believers face anything we have to face…do anything we are called to do…and be who God created us to be. We have the power to love, live and forgive. And we have the power “to meet the current and future needs of Camp Fontanelle’s ministry through Vision 2025” all because Jesus goes first. I am thankful to Jesus for going first-leading the way. And I am thankful for others who go first and lead the way.

I am thankful for those who envisioned a new retreat center at Camp Fontanelle and went first to declare the vision of how it will help the camp make even more disciples of Jesus Christ

I am thankful all the campaign leaders decided to go first in sharing this vision with others and seeking their financial support.

I am thankful for those who decided to go first and offer lead, major and special gifts to support this vision give generously to the capital campaign.

I am thankful for those congregations, staff and all the adults and children who decided to go first in supporting and participating in the ministry of Camp Fontanelle.

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to go first in to death and open the way to life beyond death. Bless and strengthen us when you call us to go first and lead the way for others. Amen.

Charlotte Abram,
Camp Fontanelle Site Council, Prayer Team
New Creations Scripture:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

I found Jesus at Camp! I had grown up in the church and had two ordained pastors as parents. This meant I spent a significant amount of time involved in church related activities. I was saturated by the life and practice of Christianity. However, even with all those incredible opportunities, I never truly encountered the Spirit. Camp provided the context for a heart-warming experience.

I remember adamantly refusing to go to camp when my mother had registered me. I wasn't much different than your typical 5th grader. So, I usually resisted any effort my mom made to make me a better person. I am so thankful for her pushing me to attend camp because those experiences completely changed my life—as a camper, counselor, and now program director.

God used camp to reveal himself, and ultimately called me into ministry. My memories of camp brought such an incredible joy, as well as deep change and healing that I could find nowhere else. Therefore in Christ, there was new creation!

Prayer: Lord we search for you in all kinds of places, but we forget that you are also searching for us. Meet us where we are and make us a new creation. Amen

Joel Coleman,
Camp Fontanelle Program director
April 4, 2018

New Life in Christ

If anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived! All of these new things are from God . . .

--2 Corinthians 5:17-18a (CEB)

Camp Fontanelle’s ministry is about changing people’s lives and leading them to Christ. A Nana wrote, “Unto you, I delivered a stressed, struggling, anxious grandson who didn’t want to come to camp because I wasn’t going too, and it wouldn’t be any fun without me, who wasn’t going to do the zip line because he was afraid of heights, who wasn’t going to ice skate because he didn’t know how, who had been having night terrors and walking in his sleep.

“You returned to me a confident, excited glowing kid who can't wait to come back to camp next year, who survived the zip line twice with excitement because that was "the only way to get back", who enjoyed ice skating even though he fell and found the ice to be very cold, who "passed out" as soon as he hit the bed every night, who set his "personal best" for using only 1 pair of boxer shorts over 4 days, who couldn't stop talking about the new jumping pillow and improved water slide, who learned to share upper and lower bunk beds with grace, who apparently followed a schedule of activities, who comfortably slept by himself in the basement upon returning to the farm.

“My grandson's mother, grandfather and I immediately felt and saw the 360 degrees of improved self-confidence and joy in his demeanor. You salvaged our beloved child. “

Prayer: Thank you, Source of Life, for Camp Fontanelle and their wonderful staff. Through their presence in the lives of campers, they have touched the lives of families – siblings, parents and grandparents. Enable them to continue changing lives and introducing campers to Christ. Amen.

Nancy J. H. Phillips,
Campaign Leadership Team
April 5, 2018

Washed Clean

Scripture
That is what some of you used to be! But you were washed clean, you were made holy to God, and you were made right with God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11 (CEB)

Church camp has to be one of the top 10 experiences of my entire life. From the first year that I went, way back in 2013, I was hooked. I loved everything about it; the friends I met, the food I ate, the activities that I can’t wait to do every year I go back. Everything. There’s never a dull moment at Camp Fontanelle, and that’s what I love about it. But at the top of everything, my favorite parts have to be the fellowship and faith.

See, prior to 2017 I was going through a large rut in my faith. I simply wasn’t believing in God. I hated going to church, hated hearing about God because I’ve heard it all before. Don’t get me wrong, it’s not like I didn’t try; my parents are Christian, my grandparents are Christian. I had the influences around me, but I hadn’t had that “sign.” Some people had big, near death experiences when God spoke to them, and others have had signs as small as a simple dream where God was talking to them. I had nothing. No sign. I hadn’t had that “aha” moment and I was really starting to doubt God, and his existence. I went into Camp Fontanelle in 2017 thinking that I’d have fun with the activities, and just tune out everything that had to do with religion. I didn’t feel comfortable talking about God to anyone, or my faith. I was embarrassed of my beliefs.

Then, something happened at camp. It was the last evening worship on the last full day of camp. I was still in that rut of my faith and it seemed as though this would just be another fun year at camp, as had been my attitude for the past few years at camp. Don’t get me wrong, I had a blast. We went zip lining, swimming, we did crafts, and we got to know new friends. But my faith in God had not gone anywhere. If anything, it was worse. I was expecting something to happen. Anything. But nothing had happened. No sign. Nothing. So one of my counselors, named Megan, got up to tell her story about how she had been in a rut, same as me. She told her story, and it was heart-wrenching. It was a story of depression, attempts at suicide, and being in that exact same rut that I was in with my faith. Towards the end, once she had wrapped up the story, there was silence. A few people were crying, and it was a time for reflection. Then, the gray clouds that had been gathering during Megan’s story, opened up and rain started pouring down. God was crying with us. It was amazing. Suddenly, I had that “aha” moment. One of the counselors brought me over and had a conversation with me privately about my faith. I told her about the rut that I was in; how I hated church, Sunday school, all of my issues with Christianity. And unlike most adults do with children, she didn’t preach about how I need to repent, or be sorry for existing because I was born into sin. No, she did something much better. She listened to me. For the first time in my life, I felt like I was genuinely comfortable with my faith. I realized that many of the people at camp have also experience this rut. This was the sign. This counselor, Morgan was her name, was my sign.

Since returning from camp in 2017 I have moved up to the adult Sunday school class and also joined the choir in the United Methodist Church of Humboldt. I’m still in contact with many of the people that I met at church camp this past year, and I don’t think that will end anytime soon. I am extremely grateful, and blessed, to be able to attend Church camp, and I will never stop recommending it to anyone that has the chance. I’ve seen, introverts, extroverts, wide people, skinny people, and people of every race attend church camp. It matters not who you are, church camp is an amazing experience, and it has renewed my faith and my relationship with God.

Prayer: Loving God, when we are down and in a rut, thank you for loving us and renewing our faith. Thank you for friends and counselors who witness their faith to strengthen us. Amen.

Austin Herr,
Freshman in High School, Camper
Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 26:36

For over 25 years I have been teaching Confirmation for my students at Camp Fontanelle. I chose the camp setting for Confirmation the year after my oldest child was one of my students. After attending weekly Confirmation Classes in my office for 36 weeks he came to me and said, “Dad, that was the worst, most boring experience I have ever had.” I knew I had to do something different. I did not want memories of Confirmation to be so negative. It was then that I started taking my class to Camp Fontanelle for 4 days of intense study of Confirmation materials. In those four days we could cover more information that I used to do in 36 weeks. The kids had a great experience that was very positive. Somehow the pool, zipline and other activities available made the time we spent in class much more enjoyable. My favorite time at Confirmation Camp is the nightly Campfire Worship. After a day of learning about God we spent time connecting with God through song, prayer and Word. We do not plan this, but every year I have taught Confirmation Camp at Fontanelle, something very special happens the last night of camp at the Campfire. Let me share the story of one young man who represents what has happened to hundreds of lives at camp. The young man was in 7th Grade and was being raised in a single mom home. He was in church almost every week and was active in Sunday School. The last night at camp I was leading singing with my guitar and I noticed this young boy across the fire from me with his head in his hands and sobbing profusely. The Campfire ended, and I went to see what was wrong. He said, “I don’t know what is going on. I am not sad at all. I don’t know why I can’t stop crying. I feel great. While we were singing I just felt like all the problems of my life were just lifted off of me. I feel so good and all I can do is cry.” He asked me what happened. I told him I am not sure, but I think you just had a God moment. At that campfire God became real for him. For most of his life he had learned about God, but at this moment at Camp Fontanelle he experienced God in a real and tangible way.

Every summer I teach Confirmation at Camp Fontanelle a similar thing happens at the last Campfire. That did not happen when I taught the class in my office. I give God thanks for each and every young life that is given to Christ at camp. Their lives have been forever changed and they have memories of Confirmation that will never be forgotten—and they will be good memories.

Rev. Bill Ritter
Blue River District Superintendent

Prayer: God, who comes to us in many ways and many places, thank you for all the lives that you have touched through the ministry of Camp Fontanelle. We pray that you may continue to strengthen them on their journey that they may be faithful disciples.
Walking the Labyrinth

The image below is a finger labyrinth. You can "walk" it on screen with your finger or mouse. Tracing the path in the labyrinth can be relaxing. It also can be balancing as you journey back and forth to the center. Repeat several times in succession to get the most benefit. Try it with your non-dominant hand for more of a challenge. It will help you to give up control and break out of your routine response pattern.

- We are all on the path... exactly where we need to be. The labyrinth is a model of that path.
- A labyrinth has only one path. It is unicursal. The way in is the way out. There are no blind alleys. The path leads you on a circuitous path to the center and out again.
- There is no right way to walk a labyrinth.

Some general guidelines for walking a labyrinth are:

1. **Focus:** Pause and wait at the entrance. Become quiet and centered. Give acknowledgment through, a nod, or other gesture and then enter.

2. **Experience:** Walk purposefully. Observe the process. When you reach the center, stay there and focus several moments. Leave when it seems appropriate. Be attentive on the way out.

3. **Exit:** Turn and face the entrance. Give an acknowledgement of ending, such as "Amen."

4. **Reflect:** After walking the labyrinth reflect back on your experience. Use journaling or drawing to capture your experience.

5. **Walk often.**

(http://lessons4living.com/labyrinth.htm)
April 07, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries in general and Camp Fontanelle specifically.

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)
Reflect on a time you or a loved one attended a camp event.

How did you experience God during your time there?
What did you learn about God through creation?
Journal your thoughts.

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Then using a hymnal or the internet look up the lyrics of a hymn such as those below, then sing or pray the lyrics of that hymn.

- How Great Thou Art, Morning Has Broken,
- All Things Bright and Beautiful,
- Cantemos al Senor (Let’s Sing unto the Lord),
- God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens,
- I Sing the Almighty Power of God,  • I Am Your Mother (Earth Prayer)
- Or song of your choice.

Pray or write a prayer of thanksgiving for camping and outdoor ministries in general and Camp Fontanelle specifically.
If the Son Sets You Free, You Will Be Free Indeed

Scripture

34 Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:34-36 NRSV).

16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17 NRSV).

Throughout my childhood, I was semi-involved in a regular church community. My family went every now and then, but attending a service was never a crucial part of the week. In 2007, the pastor encouraged all the kids in the congregation to sign up for summer camp at Camp Fontanelle. I had never been to a summer camp before but I figured it could be fun. That summer, I had a blast at camp and made some new friends, but that was about it. I did not feel God or connected with him but I kept returning to camp to see friends and take a step back from "normal" life. Five years later in school, I was hanging out with kids who did not make the best choices, and I was participating in activities that I knew were wrong. I had fallen into a slump at school and did not think there was a way out. When it came time to sign up for camp, I was excited because maybe my best friends at camp could help me feel better. That summer in 2011 after my sophomore year of high school, I found God. One of my counselors, I'll call him Paul, shared his testimony that resonated with me and related to what I was going through at school. When I was sitting around the campfire with my friends, a cool wind swept through Inspiration Point and all of a sudden, I felt this warm blanket feeling wrap around me. With tears in my eyes, I listened to Paul cry out that even though he wasn't perfect, God loved him anyway. That night, I knew I was also forgiven for my sins, and I decided that I wanted to turn my life around when I returned home.

That night, I also knew I wanted to be a camp counselor. My counselors had become big role models in my life and I wanted to be that for future campers. After serving as a counselor over the past two summers, I have seen God work in extraordinary ways. I've cherished the connections I've made with campers and co-workers and I have been able to continue to grow in my relationship with God. I've shared my faith walk with others and in return have had the amazing opportunities to help campers create their journeys. It always warms my heart when I see campers go back into the "normal" world and share the lessons and love from Camp Fontanelle.

Over the past 10 years, I have seen Fontanelle grow in so many different ways. I've seen the physical growth and hold many memories building faith paths, benches, and even a worship site at Christmas Tree Hill. I've also seen the spiritual and emotional growth of Fontanelle when I see all the names scribbled on past t-shirts and boards hung in the barn and smiling faces lining scrapbook pages made by Road Rules campers. This new investment at Camp Fontanelle is so much more than another building to me, it's more names, pages, worships, smiles, and memories.

Alii Thorn,
Camp Counselor

Prayer: Good Shepherd, Eternal Lord, thank You for leaving the ninety-nine secure and safe sheep and seeking the lost one. Thank You for the promise that who Your Son, Jesus the Savior, has set free is free indeed. Convict me of any behavior or networking that separates me from You. Then warm my heart with Your welcoming love and the grace that saves me, and saves all who turn from sin and trust in Your Son. Amen.
April 10, 2018

Time and Place for Accepting and Growing in Jesus' Grace

Scripture

Eternal God, it is wonderful to know You have always been and will always be eagerly listening for my prayers and for the prayers of any who earnestly seek You. You teach that You have no grandchildren; that each human must decide whether to accept Your grace as Your beloved child. Thank You for Camp Fontanelle's role in providing time and space for recognizing and receiving that grace, offered through Your Son, our Savior and Lord Jesus. Amen. *Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. *Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. 21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor’s household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Philippians 4:8-23

I directed several music camps at Fontanelle, as well as a couple of clown camps. My experiences were always very positive. The youth and adults who attended enjoyed both the lodge and outdoor spaces. Fontanelle is a great setting for reflection and learning. Many friendships were made and have lasted through the years.

Every so often I run into a former camper, and they always have fond memories of their time at Fontanelle. The spiritual experiences of campers help ground them in life, and many have either given their lives to Jesus Christ or have renewed their relationship with Him. Campers have deepened their faith and found help for difficult situations they are struggling with. Camp experience is a refreshing and positive respite from the busyness and doldrums of everyday life.

And the above does not mention the many positive experiences of the counselors. I had very little trouble finding counselors each year because many of them were eager and more than willing to return for another camp. We all learned so much from the campers. Many of us developed a special relationship with one or more campers through special talks when they needed a listening ear, helping them in their quest for truth, or just watching them maneuver through the day. It was a growing and enriching experience for counselors as well.

James B. Miller
Volunteer, camp director, Prayer Team member

Prayer: Eternal God, it is wonderful to know You have always been and will always be eagerly listening for my prayers and for the prayers of any who earnestly seek You. You teach that You have no grandchildren; that each human must decide whether to accept Your grace as Your beloved child. Thank You for Camp Fontanelle's role in providing time and space for recognizing and receiving that grace, offered through Your Son, our Savior and Lord Jesus. Amen.
April 11, 2018

The Gift of Giving

Scripture

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.” (Mark 12: 41-44)

Our family became involved with Camp Fontanelle when our children were preschoolers. “Daddy” brought his son Walter to Guardian Angel camp when Walter was just 4 years old. The following year, “Daddy and Mommy” brought both preschoolers to Family Camp, when our daughter Evangeline turned 3 years old: the 4 of us stayed in an A-frame cabin and fell asleep, exhausted, in our sleeping bags.

Since those first days more than a dozen years ago, I have been fond of preschooler camps. At Guardian Angel camp, wide-eyed children have their first Christian camping experience accompanied by someone who dearly loves them and wants to share the love of Jesus: remember that Jesus also took his followers out on long walks and taught them outdoors.

I have been a camp dean for Guardian Angel camp, and my daughter even served as my “Junior Counselor.” A favorite memory at Camp Fontanelle happened at Guardian Angel camp. My partner-indeanship, Lynn Ashby, suggested a hands-on way for the children to experience Christ’s teaching about The Widow’s Offering. Lynn’s lesson involved a giant bag of M&M candies. At the beginning of the lesson, each preschool camper received two M&Ms, while their guardians each received 20 M&Ms. Don’t eat them! And then came the offering time. Everyone was instructed to bring up and place their “M&M” offerings in the basket …. And everyone was told to bring up 2 M&Ms. The solemn procession began, and each child and adult sacrificed the exact same number of candies.

It may have been the same number, but was it an equal sacrifice? “Who gave more?” one grandparent asked her grandchild, who stared at the empty table in front of himself, while grandma still had 18 M&Ms to enjoy. The shock of being bereft of a favored treat lingered while grandma’s mountain loomed large in a pile. Who really did give more?

That simple lesson stuck with the kids. The same lesson has stayed with me, also. When we have so many blessings, what should we return to God? Are we ever really offering a sacrifice if we don’t even notice what we have given to God? Out of all my bag of goodies, am I willing to give sacrificially, or am I afraid because my pile may not be as high as it once was?

We have opportunities to give, and many of us give out of our abundance. Are we willing to partner with God, in giving to keep the life-changing ministry of Camp Fontanelle active and effective?

Prayer:

God of us all, Thank you for amazing opportunities to experience your love! Thank you for the wonder which children experience when they come to Camp Fontanelle. Thank you for the love and devotion of parents and guardians who want their children to discover how much we all are loved by you. Help us to have hearts that are open to experiencing the wonder of life in Christ, every day. Amen.

Janice Japp, Capital Campaign Coordinator
April 12, 2018

“Why I Keep Going Back”

Scripture

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)

Do you identify with a place that draws you back, time after time, year after year? Maybe it’s a beloved grandparent’s home where you feel warm, safe and recall a simpler, unencumbered world. Maybe it’s a north woods fishing resort where you experienced tranquility on a quiet blue lake, recalling the gentle lapping of the waters on a pebbly shore. Or you are drawn, as by a powerful magnet, to your “home” church, the one that holds memories of baptisms, marriages, even funerals for those you loved and somehow recalls words of wisdom, comfort and instruction that you hungrily seek.

For me, that place is Camp Fontanelle. First campers of 1959—how everything has evolved—and yet stayed the same. Fontanelle is a simpler, less encumbered world, filled with sights, sounds and tactile reminders of nature, from the smooth log benches to the blistering, smoky twilight fire. It is songs of praise, the gentle strum of a guitar or unexpected solo descant to the last song. It is words of wisdom, comfort and instruction from the precious Bible that you love hearing. “A place to grow with God in all seasons”.

Prayer: Thank you, heavenly Father, for the place called Camp Fontanelle that we are drawn to, as by your heavenly magnet. Allow us, we pray, to support the camp and all who would seek to find you there. Amen

Priscilla Wilson,

Campaign Leadership Team
Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray. (Proverbs 22:6)

I started my involvement with the Camp after our daughter, Amanda, had such a positive, powerful, experience at camp. She had attended other camps but it was clear that Camp Fontanelle had touched her.

My wife and I attended a BBQ to try and find out even more. During that day, Janice Japp asked if I would be interested in serving on the Camp's board (our daughters were in grade school together).

Now, over a decade later, I believe more than ever that we have such a short period of time to make a positive influence on our kids. They are bombarded, daily, with negative messaging. Camp Fontanelle is an oasis of hope in a desert of morass (or so it seems).

All churches are just a couple of generations away from extinction at any time. That is another reason why it is so important that we, as adults, do whatever we can to help prepare future generations of church members and leaders.

Camp Fontanelle was the beginning of even greater involvement with youth. I served on the initial Great Plains Camping Board and have been an adult leader on St. Andrews youth mission trips for several years.

While all of this was initially WAY outside my comfort zone, I now look back and know that it was meant to be, and I would do it all over again!

By Ron Cardey,
Capital Campaign Leadership Team

Prayer: Loving God, order our steps in your word and help us guide young and old towards your loving care. Amen
April 14, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries and Camp Fontanelle’s Director Trent Meyer and family

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)
Sunday Meditations and Reflections 3rd  
Sunday of Easter  
April 15, 2018 Guided  

Meditation: Recite or Read Psalm 23  

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
   he leads me beside still waters;  
   he restores my soul.  
3 He leads me in right paths  
   for his name’s sake.  
4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
   I fear no evil; for  
   you are with me;  
   your rod and your staff—  
   they comfort me.  
5 You prepare a table before me  
   in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil;  
   my cup overflows.  
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
   all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
   my whole life long.  

Imagine yourself in each of the settings listed in Scripture.  
What does the grass feel like, smell like?  
Is there a breeze?  
Is sun warm, the sky blue or are there clouds?  
How is the Lord leading you?  

Journal your experience.
April 16, 2018

Commanded to Give, and Joy in Giving

Scripture

7 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7 NRSV).

42 “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. (Luke 11:4 NRSV).

For the past several weeks I have been using my quiet time to focus on how to be a JOYFUL Christian. Did You know that financial support of God’s kingdom can lead to joy?

There are many reason why we SHOULD give:

1. The Lord instructs us to. The Old Testament makes it clear that tithes and offerings are to be part of our religious life. The New Testament adds to this by suggesting that we give regularly and cheerfully.
2. Where your money is, your heart is also. Sacrificial giving is evidence of submission to God’s Lordship. When we can submit our wallet to the Lord, it is clear and powerful testimony that he is Lord of our lives.
3. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift – James 1:17. We are called to imitate Christ. We are called to be generous with our resources.
4. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor. 9:7. In the Christian walk, our aim is to live a life that pleases God. Giving is one way to please our King.
5. Giving advances God’s kingdom on earth. As you know it takes lots of money to build a new retreat center. The end result is more kids are exposed to the saving grace of Christ.

I have listed why we should give, but where is the joy?

In Acts 20:35, the Holy Spirit-inspired writer recalls Jesus' saying, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Modern research backs this up. Does that surprise you?

1. Giving increases health and well-being. It gives a sense of meaning, increases physical activity, strengthens social bonds, improves immune function and even slows down aging.
2. Tithing actually improves personal finances. Researchers compared tithers to non-tithers using nine financial health indicators and found that tithers were better off in every category.
3. Spending money on others makes you happier. Students who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than those who were assigned to spend it on themselves.
4. Spending money on shared experiences produces more happiness than a selfish purchase.
5. Giving increases love for and from others. It connects people and cultivates a sense of community.

It is indeed more blessed to give than receive. As we work towards raising funds for the Camp Fontanelle retreat center, focus on the joy which can be found through giving.

Lynn Ashby
Volunteer, physician assistant, Campaign Leadership Team

Prayer: Sustaining God, how wonderful is Your provision for my earthly needs. Inspire me always to recognize that my health, my funds, my dwelling, all my resources come from You and the abilities and circumstances You have provided. Thank You for the joy of giving. May I perceive the difference, for this earthly time and for eternity, that financial stewardship makes. Motivate me to give back to Your cause, for Your glory, and marvel at my joy in so honoring You. In the name of the Savior who gave all. Amen.
April 17, 2018

Peace of Christ

“And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

It was the first Saturday in December and I grumbled as I sent the kids back upstairs to dress in warmer clothes. A group from church was going to Camp Fontanelle that morning to hike up to Christmas Tree Hill and gather greens for wreaths and garland. It was cold and drizzling out and as I gathered pliers, yard clippers, wire, and other tools, I kept thinking about how much I would like to stay home. The house was a mess, I hadn’t started Christmas shopping, and I had no idea when we would have time to decorate and put our tree up. And I still needed to prepare my Sunday School lesson for the next day.

The kids were excited to go to camp Fontanelle, as it had become one of their favorite places. We found all our hats, gloves, and boots, and then piled in the car. On the drive out to camp I told myself I was crazy. With so much to do, why was I giving up a Saturday? Again, my mind filled with the list of things I needed to get done. By the time we arrived I had a knot of worry in my stomach, the beginning of a pounding headache, and could feel myself getting cranky. I told myself that we would just stay for an hour. We parked the car and joined the group getting ready to hike off into the woods.

The children all ran ahead laughing, and the adults set off with an easy chatter and careful steps to avoid the slippery, wet leaves. Quickly I found myself noticing the rich, earthy smell of wet soil. I spotted the tiny drops of moisture on shiny brown and orange leaves. It felt good to walk and stretch unused muscles as we climbed down a ravine and back up the other side.

The noise of the children grew faint and as I stopped to catch my breath, I noticed the quiet stillness of the forest. It was amazingly beautiful! I took a deep breath and looked around and looked inside. My headache was gone, my stomach was calm and my heart felt light. I suddenly knew that Jesus was right beside me and that I was supposed to be right where I was. Everything would get done. I wasn’t alone.

An astounding peace surrounded me that morning. My children and I had a wonderful time gathering greenery, pinecones, and berries. Friendships were strengthened, the hot chocolate was delicious, and the wreath would be beautiful hanging on our front door.

At Camp Fontanelle that day I so easily felt the peace of God all around me. I walked and worked and loved knowing that Jesus was right beside me. Now, every time I arrive at camp, shut my car door and take that first deep breath, I am overcome with God’s peace. At home, when things get hectic, and they always do, I often remember this day. I say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus and the peace of knowing he is always with me.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14:27

Kara Hutton, Campaign Leadership Team

Prayer: Creator God, we thank you for all the times you renew our spirits with your presence. Help us bless and honor wonder of creation just as creation blesses us. Amen.
April 18, 2018

God Never Fails to Sh Up

Scripture

Because of the LORD’s great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:22-23

My story is similar to most people my age, I was raised in the church by a very loving family. Although our family attended church most Sundays, I never felt the closeness that many people spoke about, that was until I started attending camp each summer at Camp Fontanelle. When I was young, the minute that my mom’s tires hit the gravel road lined with trees I could start to hear my heartbeat in my ears as I started to get so excited for what was going to happen in the next week. I was always excited about the games we would play, the silly songs that we would sing, and the crafts we would create but I could never imagine what God would do in my life each summer.

Fast forward ten years and my heart still beat in my ears as my tires hit the gravel of the familiar road as I came to be a counselor at the childhood camp that meant so much to me. As a near college graduating student, the familiar feel of Camp Fontanelle gave me peace, as I did not know what would be coming next. The whole summer I spent running not only from the “what’s next?” conversation, but also from God Himself. On week nine after running I came to a stop in front of a huge mountain that was almost 80 3rd-5th grade campers. On the busiest week of the summer I was blown away by the character of God showing up in the toothless smile of a homesick 3rd grade camper, the impossible happening over and over again, and the strength that we had to complete the week. God showed up in big ways when our human hearts, bodies, and minds were struggling. Once again God showed faithful even though I had been running and I was found right in his arms, at home at Camp Fontanelle.

Morgan Boroviak
Camper and Counselor

Prayer: Dear
God,
Thank you that you are always eager for us to turn to you, for you are waiting. We give thanks that Camp Fontanelle is a place where so many experience your welcoming, inviting love and feel at home.
And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.  

New King James Version (NKJV)

I do not hesitate in the least to say that church camps and especially Camp Fontanelle have played a large role in my spiritual journey. I remember those weeks of camps in my youth with great fondness. I was lucky enough to attend a few camps at Camp Fontanelle and Camp Comeca during my younger years. As much as I appreciated my parents taking me to church and Sunday School on Sundays, it was these camps that really struck me hard that Jesus isn’t just a relationship you seek out on that one day a week. He isn’t someone who only wants your heart when you are inside the house of his Father. He is someone who seeks out that relationship in church, at home, and amongst the trees and bugs!! Camp really helped me understand to take time to see God around us. He is a marvelous and sacrificial God!

I didn’t really attend camps in junior high and high school, but when a director of a Lutheran camp in Ashland came to my college job fair I got the camp bug again! I applied and was offered a job as a camp counselor and that was one of the best summers of my life. Not only do I get to see SOOOOOO many kids who are there for Jesus, but my faith was strengthened being around other young adults who were passionate about His Kingdom. When I was thinking about what I would do the next summer, working at Camp Carol Joy Holling was definitely at the top of my list. However, something that my pastor said one day convinced me to also apply at Camp Fontanelle. And when both camps offered me a job, I turned down Carol Joy for a chance to work at Camp Fontanelle. God was just nudging me in the direction He wanted me to go!! I met my wife at camp while we were both working there that summer. Now we share a strong link to the camp and are super excited for the big changes and next steps on the horizon. I am amazed at how much the camp has grown and developed physically, while at the same time growing and developing Shalom. I can’t wait to see the immense number of lives changed when the camp can facilitate more of what the leadership envisions when the retreat center is completed. Please consider what God is speaking into you, and whether big or small answer that call!!

Philip Rohde
Camp Counselor and Dean

Prayer:

Loving God,

Thank you for the ways you lead us in your path and for the significant people that we meet as we follow you. Christian friendships are such a blessing!

Amen
April 20, 2018
Jesus Honors Godly Desires and Sacrifices

Scripture

All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace.  (Isaiah 54:13)

3 I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. 6 For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; 7 for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.  (2 Timothy 1:3-7NRSV).

I have seen and heard and felt the heart-felt passion of our Camp Fontanelle staff for the spiritual growth of each camper. This is regardless of the depth of each camper's individual relationship with Jesus Christ when the camper arrives at camp.

Hearing our camp staff describe their personal and collective desire to ensure a fun camp experience, along with a focus on the love of Jesus, and the many blessings of God, inspires me to spread the word about Camp Fontanelle and the impact it has on so many youth. Telling the story of young lives changed for Jesus becomes so much easier after hearing what our camp leaders and staff say about their goals and dreams for the camper experience.

Our local church congregation realizes more and more that bringing the Camp Fontanelle experience to even more young people can have an positive impact beyond measuring- which makes it a God-measure of goodness.

May God bless our camp staff and leaders and their desire to share their own Jesus relationship with each camper.

Prayer: Lord of hosts, You are such a gracious God. Yes, You are judging through Your Son, but You have made Jesus an advocate for each person who trusts Him. Thank You for allowing Camp Fontanelle to spread Jesus' way and light so that many have a wonderful, opportunity to trust in Christ. Thank You for honoring the sacrifice of Camp Fontanelle staff and leaders, many of whom work for a very small earthly wage but are beacons to campers and others who visit Camp Fontanelle, beacons for the name and way of Jesus, as I now pray. Amen.

Craig Nordaker
An active United Methodist Men's leader, Campaign Leadership Team
April 21, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries and Camp Fontanelle’s program & support staff and family

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)

Sunday Meditations and Reflections
4th Sunday of Easter
Guided Meditation: Psalms 19:1-6

1 The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

2 Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,

5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

Think of your favorite part of nature...what is it telling you about God?

Think of your favorite spot at Camp Fontanelle. Why is it your favorite?

Thank God for both.
April 23, 2018

God’s Guiding Light

Scripture

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

As we finished a spirit-filled worship at Inspiration Point one night, the campers and counselors gathered to start off on a traditional night hike. Before we left to head into the forest, Pastor Matt Fowler called me back to the campfire and said, “Kate, take this flashlight in case you need it.”

I liked to believe my camp counselor wilderness skills were quite polished, which meant that I definitely did not need a flashlight for a blind night hike. In my own stubbornness, I tried to decline his offer because (after four summers as a camp counselor) I knew the trails as if they were etched on the back of my hand. However, Matt convinced me to take it.

I tailed off the end of the line with another counselor. A ways into the hike, one of my girls whispered to us that she was dizzy. We stopped so she could catch her breath, and we fell behind the group. I figured they were hiking up to Christmas Tree Hill, the normal destination for night hikes. That’s the trail the three of us continued on, once she was ready to go again.

As we went on, my camper became anxious in the darkening forest. Shaking and afraid, she asked for a flashlight to illuminate the path. I handed over the one Matt had made me take, in case I needed it.

Though we never caught up to everyone else, my camper ended up leading our group of three to Christmas Tree Hill. We prayed together underneath the shadowed trees before turning around. She courageously led us back to the lodge safely — where we learned that the rest of them actually took the much shorter, less steep hike along the Cabin Trail.

Had I been too stubborn to accept the flashlight, my twelve-year-old-camper wouldn’t have felt safe in the dark forest. That night, I experienced the way that God gives us guidance and light to walk through our days, despite our stubborn natures. We aren’t called to walk blind and alone through this night hike of a life, because God constantly invites us to ask Him to light our paths. That night in the forest taught me that.

Prayer: God, help us lower our walls so that our stubborn hearts might be illuminated to Your works in our lives. We pray that all who step foot in the forest of Camp Fontanelle experience Your goodness, guidance and love. Amen.

Kate Laing,
Campaign Leadership Team
A Place to Grow With God

31 Then Jesus said, “If you remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples. 32 You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” John 8:31-32

The Power of Prayer holds us firmly and securely in the true life of discipleship following Jesus. Lord may it ever be so.

Jesus saves us and we are free. We are His children, to live free, with a free will, to walk freely along the path He has given to each of us.

The Father’s path ahead is one of eternal purpose, with a heavenly ending, and it is paved with Hope, Peace, Joy, and best of all His Love and Forgiveness.

Let us pray powerful prayers for strength and encouragement to firmly stay on His eternal path. And with His blessings to us we reach out to those who may have fallen under the weight of trouble and despair. We can share our blessings with those who may have turned left or right from the path into the darkness of sin and sorrow.

There are places along the path that shine brightly, are safe and secure, providing “A Place to grow with God.” Here an intentional Christian Community shares “Beyond Belief – The Universe of God.” Camp Fontanelle – A Great Plains United Methodist Camp is such a place.

Many campers have spoken the “truth” about their time at the camp:

God showed me I can laugh and enjoy creation, even in times of doubt. -16 y.o. Male, Joyful Noise Camp

Counselors helped me realized that God was still with me even through the hard times and even when it’s not super obvious -16 y.o. Female F.R.O.G. Camp

He helped me become a better person -9 y.o Male Zoobilee Camp

I felt his presence more than I ever have before. It made me feel welcome and loved. -17 y.o. Girl’s Only Camp

I saw everything in a new light after I welcomed him to my heart - 11 y.o. Female, Zoobilee Camp

I learned more about him and how we can do nothing without him. -12 y.o. Female Splish Splash Camp

Prayer: Let us pray even more powerful prayers again to support the vision and campaign for Camp Fontanelle to grow and continue to be “Branching Out,” focusing on the lives that are transformed throughout this brightly shining ministry path.

Gary Spivey, Prayer Team
April 25, 2018

God in Your Eye

Scripture:
1 The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; 4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

I was introduced to the book Mister God, This is Anna by Fynn and Anna’s Book compiled by Fynn when I was in high school. Anna was a small child, orphaned in London in the 1930s and taken in by Fynn and his mother. Her life was short but her wisdom was greater than most of ours. She knew God in intimate and incredible ways. Anna would have loved camp. She would have driven the counselors crazy, but she would have loved camp.

Fynn tells that Anna went to church and Sunday school but the experience of it irritated her. Anna shared her thoughts about church. Please note the following are Anna’s words, misspellings and all.

“I don’t like to go to cherch very much and I do not go becase I do not think Mister God is in cherch and if I was Mister God I would not go. Peple in cherch are miserable becase peple sin miserable songs and miserable prers and people make Mister God a very big bully and he is not a big bully becase he is funy and luving and kind and strong. I did not go to cherch on Sunday becase I did not want to go and Fin tuk me on a trane to a big forist and Fin cudle me and tell sum wondfull story about Mister God and it was better than Sunday school. In cherch peple make Mister God big and big and big and Mister God get so big that you dont know, but Fin make Mister God so little, he get in your eye.”

Church is full of broken people doing broken things. Sometimes those are good things, God things. Often it means they do church stuff well, but forget how to be Christ-like. Thou shalt call together a committee to appoint a sub-committee to determine the feasibility of moving the flower stands two inches forward. Thou shalt forever and always leave hanging the picture Uncle Pete donated in 1943 though it’s so faded no one knows what it’s a picture of. Thou shalt not squirm or wiggle or whisper or smile, or sit in any pew that does not bear the mark of your posterior for it is most surely someone else’s sacred spot. All those “thou shalts” suck the joy right out of it; leave it empty. And leave me thirsting for God.

God, you are my God. I search for you. I thirst for you like someone in a dry, empty land where there is no water. I have seen you in the Temple and have seen your strength and glory. Because your love is better than life, I will praise you. I will praise you as long as I live. I will lift up my hands in prayer to your name. Psalm 63:1-4

Yep, sometimes church sucks and I’d rather run off to camp, to the forest, too.

Church sometimes leaves me feeling like the Psalmist – thirsty for God. The Temple Anna saw God in was the forest, in God’s “natural setting.” Me too. And not just us, lots of other kids - the grown kind too.

In the forest, it’s all God. Not God obscured by politics and procedures and properness. Nope. All that’s stripped away. It’s pure and real, all God stuff. You can see, hear, and smell God in all that natural stuff all around you. All that nature came from the marvelous imagination and heart of God. You can touch it and, yes taste it too, should you be willing to eat grass and bugs – ahem. When God is in your eye, like Anna said, and your ears and mouth and nose and all around you, God gets in your heart too.

Prayer: Thank you, God for camp: for the oak leaves chattering in the wind, the soft, satin fur of a bunny, the warm, woody scent of cedar, the darkness of night splattered with a million stars, and the sticky sweetness of a peach picked right off a tree. Thank you for a temple that all the Annas and Ethans can go to and find you; where they can experience you and know your love. Be in their eyes and ears, noses and mouths, in their minds and in their hearts. May they praise you as long as they live. Amen.

Mina Nutter,
April 26, 2018

Testimony from a Confirmation Camper’s Mom

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. 2 Peter 3:17 (CEB)

I just want to say "thank you" for the amazing camp experience that you gave my daughter this past week. She has been going to church and Sunday School every Sunday since she was a baby, and she knows all the Bible stories inside out, etc. She's an all-around good kid. But I gave you a spiritual child and you returned to me a spiritual young adult. The depth of the conversations that we had on the way home from camp and then in the car on the way over to my Mom's to pick up her sisters took me a bit by surprise. She matured in her faith immeasurably in the 3 days she spent with you. It is a wonderful thing to watch a child grow in God - but you guys know that because I'm sure that's what keeps you doing this year after year!

Thank you so much for giving the gift of your time to the ministry of these young adults. God bless you!

A Grateful Mom

Prayer: God, we thank you for all the ways you grow us in the faith and confirm our faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. Thank you for Camp Fontanelle, it’s directors, counselors and all the staff as they continue to offer experience that help young and old confirm their beliefs and grow as disciples of Christ. Amen
April 27, 2018

Treasurer in Clay Jars

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” 2 Corinthians 4:7

I was half way up the Elephant Steps at Camp Fontanelle when I realized that the arthritis in my knees wouldn’t allow me to keep up with the campers I was chaperoning. I told them go on without me and I would catch up with them at the top of the steps. Thank goodness, the other counselors were physically fit enough to keep up with these active tweens. However, I only had to go it alone for a few minutes. Two of the campers, twin boys from the congregation where I served as associate pastor, decided to come back to walk with me. They didn’t say a word about my inability to keep up. We just walked and talked together as we climbed each step. Their actions spoke louder than words.

I had been in the presence of these very active (almost rambunctious) boys at church activities. I engaged with them during children’s time at worship. However, I was privileged to see another side, a deeply compassionate side God had hidden inside them. It shined through.

Through camping ministries, the lives of children, youth and adults have the opportunity to develop, explore and deepen their faith life and relationship with God as they encounter nature. I also think the camping experience can reveal a part of our inner spirit...that part that is often hidden inside, just waiting for a chance to shine through.

Over the years, every time I have stepped away from my busy schedule to intentionally spend time with God, especially in nature, I have been blessed to sense the presence of God in shining around and hopefully through me and others. I am thankful that Camp Fontanelle provides a place and space to do that. I am also thankful for the new retreat center, for it will be a place where souls can be renewed.

Thanks be to God that we can support ministries which allow us to witness God’s precious spirit shining through each of us.

Prayer Actions: Think of a time when you have experienced the grace of God shining through another person’s life. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for that person and that experience. Think of a time when you believe God’s presence and grace has shone through your life. Give thanks to God for experience

Charlotte Abram,
Site Council, Campaign Pray Team
April 28, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries and Camp Fontanelle’s summer staff.

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)

Sunday Meditations and Reflections 5th Sunday of Easter
Read and reflect on Psalm 24:1-2

1 The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it,  
the world and its inhabitants too.  
2 Because God is the one who established it on the seas;  
God set it firmly on the waters.

Questions for Reflection

• How does your life reflect this Scripture’s acknowledgement that everything belongs to God?

• As a steward of all God has entrusted to you, how do you determine how to employ the resources you have in your possession?

• Donald Whitney says “…the question is not, ‘How much of my money should I give to God?’ but rather ‘How much of God’s money should I keep for myself?’”

Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

If you believe that is true, how would it change you giving?

• Say a prayer for the Branching Out Capital Campaign, that the financial goals will be fully funded, and then some.

April 30, 2018
Ambassadors for Christ

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39 NRSV)

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” 18 He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. 19 See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:17-20 NRSV)

With camping season approaching...we have endless opportunity to revel in God's wonder and blessings. We are fortunate that we can remind others of nature's beauty and relish its importance for those less fortunate than we...But how can we truly savor this beauty ourselves? Why not share it with neighbors, spouse, brothers, sisters and friends? God's plan for us implores US to act as ambassadors for God and Christ's teaching. This message of hope, faith and goodness is a victory over Satan's plan of gloom, despair and misery.

Take heart; these are the words of the Creator, the Chosen One, the Victor over death. If we deny the Almighty in our world, surely he will deny / exclude us on Judgment day. We possess the power to proclaim the 'good news' thus disabling Satan.

Mark 8:36 states 'for what has man gained if he wins the entire world but loses his own soul in the process?' I fell victim to this once but felt MY circumstances required constant attention. x # of jobs, countless W-2 forms-11 once. I couldn’t stop the thought from haunting me. The words gainingloosing raced thru my mind daily. I attempted to accommodate it, live it, pray about it. It became easier..Soon I started to see the big PICTURE.

Nevertheless, reality IS what it is.

Prayer: Thank you for your interest in Christian camping and in the Victor over death.

Duane Gunderson, Camp Ambassador

Mighty Lord, conqueror over chaos, victor over the grave, I praise you for your dominion and rule over every dark or evil place. Enlighten me to grasp your power and humbly guide me to offer hope and direction to others who do not know your Savior son. Help hundreds of campers and counselors to awaken to your direction and spread your light. In the name of the one who ransoms us from sin and death, even Jesus the Messiah. Amen.
The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” John1:35-41

When I was twelve my mother suggested that I should go to Church Camp. It was a very new experience for me as there were no girls in our church and only two older boys. I was the only one in my confirmation class. Mother’s words may not have been “Come and See” but her intent for me was to have the opportunity to experience Jesus with girls my age.

Camp Petit Jean is a beautiful wooded area on the top of Petit Jean mountain in Arkansas. What it offered me was a new way to know God with girls my peers. At camp God became very real to me in the prayers, the singing, the counselors, my new friends, and the beauty of the chapel which overlooked a valley. My eyes were opened to a Savior who lived among us, even preteen girls. It was a life changing experience for me.

Camp Fontanelle’s Mission Statement is “Impacting Lives Through Intentional Christian Community”. Fontanelle is a place to “Come and See” guided by the staff and shared with other young people. Campers will have the opportunity to know God, to realize God’s purpose for their lives, and to become servant leaders.

Today I am called to say, ”Come and See, Camp Fontanelle.” Come for a tour, come for an event, come for camp. You will have a unique opportunity to know God. Camp can change lives. I invite you to “Come and See”.

Bette Trumble,

Site Council, Capital Campaign Co Chair

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for the invitation to come, see and experience your love poured out in creation. We thank you for those who send and/or invite us to embrace your presence in our lives. Amen
In Ministry to All

49 John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.” 50 But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him; for whoever is not against you is for you.” Luke 9:49-50

I was at the Camp Fontanelle Barbeque when I looked up from my duties at the table I was hosting. I saw a familiar face that seemed out of place to me. It was a joy to see this clergy sister of mine, but I wondered what she was doing at the Barbeque. She was, after all, a pastor in another denomination. I went over to greet her and said, “I didn’t expect to see you here.” As we talked I found out that she is actually the pastor of a Lutheran Church in the Fremont area. She said her congregation would never miss a chance to come to the Camp Fontanelle Barbeque. Their congregation uses the camp’s facilities and considers it a blessing to support Camp Fontanelle whenever possible.

Later, in conversations with our camp’s director, Trent Meyers, I found out that several faith groups as well as secular group use our camping facility. Not only that, with the building of the new retreat center Camp Fontanelle will be capable of hosting even more groups in a more efficient way.

Jesus words from Luke reminds me that those who are not against us, are for us. Within our community we may be a part of different denominations or different faith groups from our friends, coworkers or neighbors, yet we serve the same God. Or some may not be a part of a faith community at all. However Jesus’ words help us know that when we encounter someone who practices the faith different than we do, or has no faith at all, we don’t need to build a wall. We can build bridges instead. Thankfully the Camp Fontanelle facilities are open to serving all faiths and those who may not express a faith stance.

Thankfully our new retreat center will help Camp Fontanelle serve more and more people in the surrounding area. That is another reason I am thankful and happy to support the vision to erect this new retreat center for it will be a great tool for ministry, all to the glory of God.

Prayer: Gracious God, please help us extend a hand of friendship across our different belief systems. Help us to reach out to other who don’t yet claim a relationship with you. Please continue to help us offer Camp Fontanelle as a place that is welcoming of all. In Jesus Name. Amen

Charlotte Abram,
Site Council, Campaign Prayer Team
May 03, 2018

Drawing Close to God and Each Other

Scripture

*I no longer call you slaves, for a master doesn’t confide in his slaves: now you are my friends, proved by the fact that I have told you everything the Father told me.* (John 15:15)

It was always a time I looked forward to—picking my daughter up from camp. We had a time honored routine. I picked her up bursting to hear how her week had gone. We always stopped at Dairy Queen to get blizzards as we drove home to Omaha. And as we ate those blizzards, she would share her experiences from the week. We bonded over stories about mail call, tubing, mission work, and so many others. Of course, she shared all of the fun experiences, but she also shared the hard ones, like talking about the loss of her beloved grandpa, my dad. She was in high school all the years she went to Camp Fontanelle and those can be difficult times to connect with your teenager. Camp helped to bridge the gap.

Just like I waited to hear all about her days, God waits to hear about ours. He longs to hear what we do and how we feel. And in doing so, we draw closer to Him in the good and the not so good times. The love and joy I felt at hearing about my daughter’s camp experiences gives me some small perspective on how God must feel when I come to Him. I can only imagine the greatness of His excitement. How can I not draw nearer to Him, when I see His grand love for me? Camp Fontanelle brought my daughter and I closer to each other and closer to God. Each year, we return for the Annual BBQ to remember past times and create new memories. We can do this with God as well, if we’ll only draw near.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the gift of Your friendship and Your longing to share each detail of our lives. Thank you for Camp Fontanelle where we can draw nearer to You. May we honor Your desire for friendship by giving you our time and sharing all that is on our hearts.

Tammy Stoner.
Prayer Advocate
May 04, 2018

“Great is Your Faithfulness”

Scripture: Lamentations 3:21-26

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for God’s compassions never fail. They are new every morning: great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for my LORD.” The LORD is good to those whose hope is in God, to the one who seeks God; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

It was in 1999, when my husband and I returned to our Nebraska roots, that I learned about Camp Fontanelle. Ironically, I grew up in southeast Nebraska, and yet I had never heard about Camp Fontanelle that was literally a hop, skip & a jump away from my home! I instantly fell in love with the camp; after all, its natural beauty and setting allows for one to fully enjoy God’s creation!

I have been to Camp Fontanelle many times as a dean for F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely On God) Camp, Parent And Kid (PAK) Camp, and Confirmation Camp. Over the years, the lessons learned, the friendships formed and the youth that have said “Yes” to following Jesus and serving him have made Camp Fontanelle one of the most precious spiritual resources that we have in the Great Plains Annual Conference.

Even today, I look forward to each opportunity that I can commune with God in nature and to enjoy those birds singing their praises in the morning, and the tree frogs telling their stories at night. Camp Fontanelle always come into my life at just the right time to renew my faith, recharge my spiritual batteries and refresh my soul!

The passage in Lamentations listed above comes following a deep lament… I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I remember them, and my soul is downcast within me (Lamentations 3:19-20). The author, believed to be the prophet Jeremiah, then directs those lamenting to the LORD’s great love, compassions and faithfulness that are new every morning. We are reminded that, as God’s people, we can offer our praise and wait upon the LORD and the gift of salvation.

One of my favorite prayers that I have used for many years is found in the United Methodist Hymnal under “An Order for Morning Praise & Prayer”:

New every morning is your love, Great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors, and to devote each day to your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. AMEN.

Prayer: As I pray this prayer specifically this day, I give thanks to God for Camp Fontanelle and the many blessings that I have already experienced, and the many blessings that await me in the future!

Rev. Cindi Stewart,
Camp Dean
May 05, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries and the campers who will attend this season.

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)
Read and reflect on Psalm 8

1 O L ORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. 2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; 4 what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

5 Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

9 O L ORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Moments of Reflection

Go for a walk, sit on your front porch, deck or in your yard, or peak through your window.

• What is the most magnificent part of nature to you?
• What is your favorite place in God’s world?
• What place at Camp Fontanelle most reflects the majesty of God’s creation to you?
• Where is the place(s) in nature where you encounter the Holy One most frequently?

Journal your thoughts below.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
God is for real!

Scripture: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Every day God has plans for each person’s life. As humans, we often turn away or do not listen to God and miss out on the blessings of following in obedience to God’s plan. An atheist would say that “God is not real”. I know better because I have seen the blessings of God’s provision and know God is real.

After college I worked a number of years as a school teacher teaching science to 7-12 grade students. My parents had been teachers, my grandmother was a teacher, my two sisters are teachers. While teaching has many intrinsic rewards, after teaching in 3 different districts for a total of six years, I did not feel like teaching was going to be a lifelong career for me. I had plans to leave teaching if the opportunity to deliver mail arose. I had worked as a substitute one year and had taken the tests and scored high and was respected in the office where I worked. I was almost guaranteed a job in this office if one opened. However, during that year 9/11 happened, and there was an anthrax scare with mailing letters. Only essential vacancies were being filled by the USPS. So, I continued to teach. It was during my last year that a fellow teacher, who also happened to sit on Camp Fontanelle’s Site Council, approached me and said, “I think you would make a great camp director at Camp Fontanelle, I think you should apply”. Being a camp director was not on my bucket list, but I looked into the potential opportunity sort of half-hearted. I sent in my resume minus a cover letter. My fellow teacher knew this and suggested I might want to send in a cover letter to let the others know a bit more about myself. I thought I was probably out of the mix, yet that evening (minus a cover letter) I received a call that I was a finalist and Camp Fontanelle wanted to interview me. I interviewed and was offered the job. This job has been a dream job where it often does not feel like work to me. I was made to do what I am doing. Two weeks after I accepted, I got a call from the USPS that they had TWO positions open and wanted to interview me for those positions. I would have accepted had I not already taken the site director position. God had a plan and thankfully, I obediently made choices to follow though reluctant at first. In hindsight, everything that happened was confirmation that God is for real, and God helped me navigate and make right decisions.

Camp is a place where campers have ‘God is for real’ moments. Through the hustle and bustle of today’s society and devices we often miss out on recognizing these moments. God IS for real!!

Trent Meyer
Camp Fontanelle Site Director

Dear God,

Thank you that you do not leave us to find our way alone, but you guide us in the right paths when we seek to follow you. We pray for the campers and for ourselves that we may discern your leading in our lives and follow in joyful obedience. We also thank you for the camp staff, who have said “yes” to your call. Amen

May 07, 2018
May 08, 2018

Camping has Generational Impact, One Soul at a Time

Scripture

The Lord established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children not yet born, and they in turn would tell their children. (Psalm 78:5-6)

I am writing this from our little flat in Island Bay, New Zealand, where my husband, Doug, and I have come to meet our first grandchild, Nora. I have been thinking a lot about my hopes and dreams for this precious little one. My prayer for Nora is that she would know that she is loved by God and that following the Way of Jesus makes all the difference. I pray that she would know the world to be a beautiful place of infinite variety and full of adventure. I hope that she will be open to meeting and becoming friends with all kinds of people. I hope that Nora will have times when she can laugh and play, sing and dance and be creative. But I also wish for her opportunities to have to step outside her comfort zone and take risks, trusting others (and God) to help her with the challenges, because that is how she will grow.

As I look over this list of hopes I have for Nora, I’m struck by how they are all things that are fostered in a church camping environment. God’s love IS proclaimed and experienced. The natural environment IS explored and enjoyed. New friends from many places and backgrounds WILL be made. There IS time for singing and dancing, silly skits and awesome crafts. There IS the challenge of new skills to be learned that feel a little risky, but there will be others cheering you on. And each of these can provide an opportunity for experiencing the presence of God. As a church camp participant and leader, I’ve seen over and over again the power of the camping experience to touch children, youth and adults with God’s love in ways that make an eternal impact. Isn’t this what we hope for all our children and grandchildren?
This is why I believe in the ministry of Camp Fontanelle and choose to give generously to this financial campaign to increase the camp’s ability to impact lives for Jesus. And someday, I hope to bring Nora to Camp Fontanelle.

Prayer: Loving God, help us to remember your great desire to let the little children come to you. We give thanks for the ministry of Camp Fontanelle that creates an environment where children, youth and adults can encounter you. Show us how we may support this campaign which will, we pray, allow more of your children to experience the life-changing power of your love.

Anne Kallesen,
Campaign Leadership Team, Prayer Team
May 09, 2018

An Exercise in Trust

The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion will feed together, and a little child will lead them.

-- Isaiah 11:6 (CEB)

While attending Guardian Angel camp with my four year old grandson, he led me to many rich experiences. Through his eyes, Camp Fontanelle was a place filled with fun activities. We went swimming, bounced on the jumping pillow, played in the sand box, fed the animals at the petting barn, made s’mores, slept in an A-frame and worshiped God. In 24 hours, many good memories were made.

However, allowing my grandson to lead me to a tree while I was blindfolded was a big challenge. The goal was to get to know the tree so that I would be able to find and identify it later. He was so excited to be able to take my hand and help me across the grass. How was I going to trust my grandson to guide me across uneven ground? Would he recognize stumbling places and lead me around them? What if he let me walk into the tree?

While I survived this exercise, it reminded me that allowing a little child to lead me was a lesson in trust and reliance upon God. In Isaiah, God promises that “those who trust in the L ORD for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.” (Isaiah 40:31 GNT)

That day at Camp I trusted a little child to guide me across rough terrain to a tree. He did an awesome job! I did not stumble and fall or walk into a tree. In the same way, I trust God to lead me and keep me from stumbling and falling. My trust in God renews and strengthens my faith.

Prayer: Guide and Helper of the world, we trust you to lead us through the challenges and pitfalls of life. When we stumble and fall, pick us up. When we get lost, show us the way. Strengthen our trust and renew our faith. Amen.

Nancy Phillips,
Campaign Leadership Team
May 10, 2018

Changed Lives

Scripture

3 Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. (John 3:3-5 NRSV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2a NRSV)

I shared before that I have been blessed to be the Dean of Confirmation Camp at Camp Fontanelle for over 25 years. I would like to share several phenomena that I have observed each summer as I witness changed lives. Without exception, each summer on the first day of camp I am greeted with a group of students who don’t want to be there. At our first meeting they come in and plop down in a chair and fold their arms over their chest and give you the sourest face you can imagine. I always ask them, “Who didn’t want to come to Confirmation Camp today?” They look surprised by my question and then some timid arms begin to go up. “How many of you told your mom you were sick this morning?” More hands rise. “And it didn’t work this time, did it?”

Then I tell them that 13 or 14 years ago, each one’s mom and dad “stood at the altar and thanked God for this new life that had been given to them, and promised in the vows of baptism to raise you in the faith, and someday give you the opportunity to accept for yourself the love of Jesus Christ. That day has come and your life will never be the same again.”

During the week I get to see changed lives. These kids who were so upset because they were at Camp instead of sleeping late, playing on the computer, watching TV, texting their friends and playing ball go through an amazing transformation. By the end of the week they do not want to go home. Every year I have led Camp there has been at least one child who asks if they can take Confirmation Camp over again next summer. Changed lives.

But there is a greater change I have seen every summer at Camp Fontanelle. Without fail, by the last campfire on the closing night of Confirmation Camp, several young people give their lives to Christ for the first time. They have spent the week away from all distractions of life, learning about God. By the end of the week, a great many of them experience God in a memorable, sometimes moving, and more mature way, often for the very first time. God is no longer a distant abstraction that is just talked about on Sunday morning. Instead, God is someone personal who has touched their lives—and they are changed eternally. Changed lives.

Rev. Bill Ritter,
Blue River District Superintendent

Prayer: Righteous God, I confess my need for a warm heart for You. I could never earn Your salvation. I praise You for Your amazing grace, that offers me salvation as a gift through Jesus, Your son. When I and others are too "busy," too "cool," too "lazy," or too "timid" to give You energy, love and devotion, thank You for motivating us. In the name and way of Jesus I pray. Amen.
Taste and see how good the Lord is! – Psalm 34:8a (CEB)

God’s fingerprints are everywhere, just to show how much God cares.

– Hippopotamus Camp Song

Going to Camp Fontanelle is a kaleidoscope of the senses. We bring all our senses to camp to experience God’s creation. We come and we see, hear, feel, taste and smell.

We see the trees, the sky, the stars, our friends, and the forest animals.

We hear the wind in the trees, bird calls, and acorns falling on the tin roof, animal cries, scripture being read and voices singing and calling to one another.

We taste breakfast, lunch, supper and snacks; water cooling our throats, s’mores and “bug juice.”

We smell new mown grass, campfire smoke, burnt marshmallows and food cooking.

We feel the water embrace as we swim, the rough bark of a tree, the coats of the animals at the petting barn and the comfort of our beds.

God made the world around us and gave us our senses to experience it. At camp, we are surrounded by God’s creation and embraced by God’s presence. We come to camp and no one word or expression describes what we experience.

Prayers: Creator of the Universe, let us come to camp and see, hear, feel, taste and smell. Open all our senses to experience your presence and love today. Amen.

Nancy J. H. Phillips,
Campaign Leadership Team
May 12, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries and the Branching Out Capital Campaign Committee, that God would guide them in their work.

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)
May 13, 2018 Sunday Meditations and Reflections 7th Sunday of Easter

Read Psalm 104:24-35 (NRSV) 24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures. 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
26 There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.
27 These all look to you to give them their food in due season; 28 when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
30 When you send forth your spirit,[a] they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.
31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works— 32 who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.
35 b Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD!

- Underline the verse, phrase or word that makes your heart sing or gives you joy.
- Circle the verse, phrase or word that gives you pause or puzzles you.
- What phrase or word in this psalm reminds you of the habitat of Camp Fontanelle?
- What song of praise will you sing to the Lord for creation?
- Conclude with prayer.
May 14, 2018

Campfires

“When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.” (John
21:9 NIV)

Turn back the clock nearly 50 years and you might find me sitting beside a campfire with other campers. Inside the stone circle we piled some sticks and ignited a blaze, careful to sit downwind of the smelly, eye watering smoke. We sat on logs, or a grassy spot on the ground. We made Hobo Stew or hot dogs, munching chips, and enjoyed gooey-chocolaty s’mores. As the fire began to burn down our counselors handed out songbooks, which by now we needed our flashlights to sing along. We shared about our Christian journeys; how God played a role in our lives and ways we could grow in our faith. Jesus met us in the fading light of dusk and the glow of the campfire.

As I read these words from the gospel of John, I can visualize the disciples at their own meeting with Jesus next to the campfire. Jesus shared a campfire meal of fried fish and bread. He used this instance as the perfect time to reinstate Peter. For the disciples this started their ministries with confidence.

I can relate to John’s story. Just as those disciples met with Jesus at the campfire, I too encountered Jesus there, next to the campfire, in the very beginning of my faith-forming years. How many lives for Christ will we, as faithful Christians, be able to impact, by providing a campfire for the campers of today and in the future? Praise God for the times he meets us beside the campfire.

Prayer: Lord we praise you for your presence in our lives, that you meet us in our everyday situations. We pray for those campers who will learn to know and love you through the ministry at Camp Fontanelle. Thank you, Lord, for the opportunities to serve.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Cheryl A. Paden,
Pastor
May 15, 2018

Thanksgiving

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossian 3:17)

When Thanksgivings roll around, I give thanks for church camps as places where I have experienced Christ. Christ by gazing at His cross, by being with and working with His people, and by exploring His creation.

Some of my best memories are from time spent as a youth at camp, at UMMen or Emmaus or Alpha weekends, or even being with a bunch of people from our church helping on work days. Church camping has been special as a family tradition when our kids were growing up and as the kids came home from their individual camps with their own experiences and newly made friends.

My experience has been that Christ is most fully experienced when we slow down. Maybe it’s because I am a task-oriented, non-observant person, but fortunately I have found ways to keep in touch with God. For the last several years, Camp Fontanelle has provided me with one of those places to slow down and connect.

I do see those of us with knowledge of Camp Fontanelle ministries, and those of us just learning about those ministries, as being granted a golden opportunity to thank and bless God. This by fully doing what we can to support Camp Fontanelle with prayer, dedicated time, and financial gifts.

I truly believe the more we give to God, the more we will see Him and the more we will receive. It’s been my experience. And if you’ve not tried it lately, maybe it’s time to slow down and take in all God’s blessings by thanking him with your prayers, time and gifts.

No need to wait until Thanksgiving 2018!

Join with me please in praying Paul’s words, substituting “Camp Fontanelle council, staff, deans, youth counselors, workers, other volunteers, and especially the kids attending” for Paul’s “you” (I know it’s kinda long, but you do have time):

“I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—” 1 Corinthians 1:4-5 NIV

By Doug Kallesen
Campaign Leadership Team

Prayer: Generous God, you are the giver of every good gift. Thank you for giving us the gift of creation and the places we can go to enjoy nature. Please bless the ministry of Camp Fontanelle and help us care for this ministry. Amen
May 16, 2018

True Worship in the Midst of Creation

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

I am supposed to go to churches for ‘Camp Sunday’ to promote summer camps. I have very little experiences doing such things, but I received only one instruction from the camp director (who apparently knows me too well) - one thing to do, one thing to not say. So, naturally, I have to say it. He said, “Don’t tell them church sucks.”

Well church sucks. At least that is how some (maybe many) kids see it; it’s definitely how I saw things for a long time; though that’s finally starting to change. And when church sucks, church-people can too, and even God. I’m not trying to say church is horrible, but that’s just the perspective I carried for most of my life and I know I’m not alone. If the only exposure we have to God is through this hypocritical and ritualized lens, it can be very hard to see the truth - God is real and good. I want everyone to know this.

To me, camp was the Windex that finally cleaned off that lens and it continues to do so. Nature is God’s body and you can taste and touch it at camp. Deep down inside we are all God’s animals in this world. There are no separations; maybe the transcendentalists were onto something with God, man, and nature all part of a great ‘oversoul’. That got a little weird I know, but it’s true - nature/camp is a church that I can deal with.

The broken, real, grace-filled people, which camp seems to attract, speak to me as well-sometimes with just words, often with much more. We come to serve, give, move- not to receive, and in doing so, somehow we do receive. At camp we sing “They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love,” and they do. I do. There is a tangible, intentional attitude of love here, and the best part is, it leaks and the world gets to see it. That’s not something my mind can understand or I can explain in words. It’s all spirit, breath, wind.

So here’s a little prayer

Read Psalm 19:1-5

1 The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
2 Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
3 They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
4 Yet their voice[b] goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.  
5 It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

Kneel and touch the earth. Feel it. Be thankful and pray for understanding.
Why did David feel this way, this awe?
If you feel inclined (and it not too cold), lay down arms open and embrace the earth. Can you hear the voice with no sound?
Before you get up and walk away, pray this verse from Isaiah 55:12. “May I go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before me, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.”  Yes and Amen

Ethan Nutter, Camper
May 17, 2018

When life gets hectic, how do we remain joyful?

Scripture

31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Genesis 1:31 (NRSV)

14 When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. 15 They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. Romans 2:14-16 (NRSV)

When we can identify God in our day to day life, it brings us joy. When we acknowledge his presence and activity in our lives, it gives us meaning and purpose.

The beauty of nature is all around us. Blue skies, fluffy white clouds, leafy trees, trickling streams are all evidence of God our creator. I love the verse Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” The hand of God creates beauty, peace and harmony. We often overlook God’s common grace because it is, well, so common. We take it for granted due to its constant presence in our lives. God provides the world with two types of grace, common and saving. We are used to hearing about his saving grace which leads to salvation for those who believe, but we do well not to forget his common grace.

Common grace refers to the gifts and blessings he distributes to everyone because they are part of his creation and he loves them. Evidence of this is found in Mathew 5:45… “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

Common grace can spark interest in saving grace. Perhaps this is one reason why summer church camps are effective in turning hearts to Christ. Spending time away from the distractions and pace of modern life allows youth to appreciate the beauty around them. Having this beauty identified with God can lead to an initial commitment to Christ. It also is instrumental in leading an older camper or counselor to accept a call to full time ministry.

The capital campaign will allow more children to be exposed to the beauty of nature. For many concrete and cars will be replaced by trees and turf. This common grace will allow them to experience God’s love in a new way.

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Let us pray – Dear gracious and loving God. Thank You for the common grace You share with all Your creation. We pray that through Your love, more campers will make a commitment to Christ. We pray Your blessing upon our building project. Help us to find the men and women we need to make this campaign a success. Amen.

Lynn Ashby
Volunteer, parent of former Camp Fontanelle campers and camp counselor
May 18, 2018

God Shows Up

“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.”

Psalm 96:11-12

I have been to Camp Fontanelle many times...sometimes as an adult sponsor and part of the leadership, and sometimes as a participant in a retreat. And each time that I have come, God shows up. Oh, I know that God is always present, but in the midst of to-do lists and schedules, devices and distractions, it’s hard to hear God’s still, small voice. Here in this beautiful setting, away from those things that keep us distracted, God can get our attention. At the camp, I have experienced God in the wonder on a child’s face as she cradles a baby bunny. I have seen God moving around a campfire as youth share their stories about where they have seen God that day. I have felt God’s closeness during special worship times in the gazebo or at an Inspiration Point campfire or even just while walking in the woods.

Psalm 19 states that “The heavens declare the glory of God” and, in fact, all of nature declares the glory of God. To me, this beautiful, natural camp is indeed holy ground. I think about all the prayers that have been prayed here, all the decisions for Christ that have been made here, all the calls to enter Christian ministry that have been received here, all the Christian friendships that have been formed here, and all the lives that have been touched by Jesus’ love here... because God shows up.

Dear God,
Thank you for Camp Fontanelle and the impact that it has had on so many lives. Thank you for all those who have contributed to this ministry through the years with their time, their talents, their financial support, and their witness. We pray that the camp will continue to be a vital ministry that reaches more and more children, youth and adults with the love and hope that Jesus offers. Amen

Anne Kallesen,

Campaign Leadership Team, Prayer Team Co Chair
May 19, 2018

Prayer Walk for Camp Fontanelle

Please enjoy a walk outside, in your imagination or using the finger labyrinth below. As you walk, praising God for creation and please say a prayer for camping ministries and the Site Council that God would guide them in their work.

(Labyrinth picture from http://lessons4living.com/finger_labyrinth.htm)

Sunday Meditations and Reflections
Pentecost Sunday May 20, 2018

Read Romans 8:22-27 (CEB)
22 We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now.
23 And it’s not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. 24 We were
saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn’t hope. Who hopes for what they already see? 25 But if we hope for what we don’t see, we wait for it with patience.

26 In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don’t know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. 27 The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God’s will.

And

**Philippians 1:4-6 (NIV)**

4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Offer a prayer of confident faith

- that God, who has begun a good work in the life of all the campers, past, present and future, will be faithful to complete it.
- that God will complete a good work in Camp Fontanelle as we build a new retreat center to increase the camp’s ability to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
- that the Spirit strengthen all of us in our weakness as we work to accomplish the ministry and mission of Camp Fontanelle.