Annual Meeting Update

The annual meeting for the Swan Lake Christian Camp Association was held March 7th at 5:30 pm with tours of the Retreat Center. Nicholas Stoddard gave a devotional on being excited that he was tired. He reminded us that Jesus often withdrew when he was exhausted and that one of the primary purposes of the Retreat Center is to provide a place of renewal.

Jerry talked about the many incidences of God’s provision in the project thus far and that we can trust in God’s provisions for the future. Over $32,000 was given that evening with another $12,500 for a “room sponsorship” received a couple of days later. Jerry explained that when all sixteen rooms are sponsored at that amount (a total of $200,000) the project will be “at a usable stage”. Our goal is to raise that money in the next couple months so that the Retreat Center can be used next summer.

Carlyn Hofer and Lori Klassen’s service as board members has been appreciated, and they will be missed as their terms have expired. Janelle Moe was elected to a second term, and Tom Buller was elected as a new board member.

A balance budget of $290,000 was approved. This budget includes all incomes and expenses except for those connected with the building project or other special projects. SLCC has been meeting its budgets each year with income from camping programs, rental of the facilities, and donations. We praise God for his constant provision.

Summer Theme

The summer theme is going to be “All Things New”. The camp purchased the summer curriculum from Chalice Press. Last summer, the curriculum was purchased from this company also. The curriculum is Christ centered, theologically sound, and provides a daily theme, bible verses, and suggested activities to do with the kids. One of the daily themes is A New Life and is based on Ephesians 4:22-24. This verse talks about shedding your old life and being remade according to God’s image. God is offering a New Life for the campers this summer. Our hope and prayer is that God uses this curriculum to change people this summer. Please pray for the staff, counselors, and bible leaders as we teach the material.

Be Still and Know that He is God:
Rest, Fellowship and Grow

Mission Statement
Progress Report

Don is a contractor specializing in poured floor systems with whom we are working. I have been so blessed to have met him. Don came to know Jesus Christ as an adult and is passionate about what we are building here. He recognizes the need for adults to hold each other accountable and support each other through difficult times. Don is willing to donate much of his labor and has given me a list of tasks which we can perform to keep costs down during the pouring process, which will likely take place in late May. This is just another example of Christ putting people in our lives at just the right time.

We are still building with no debt and will be able to complete the floor with the cash that we have on hand. We will still need to complete the drywall, finish the insulation, hang the suspended ceiling, paint the walls, and complete the trim work. As the summer schedule allows, we will be working to complete the meeting room. We calculate more than $200,000 of expenses yet. This does not include the $59,000 specifically for the elevator. Our goal is to install the elevator immediately following completion of the rest of the building.

We have been so blessed by the donation of skilled labor in the plumbing, flooring, electrical, and concrete work. We have also enjoyed the response of those willing to clean up and help with the sheetrock and other less skilled tasks. God has placed people with willing hearts at just the right times in just the right places. While I wish the project were already completed, I also want to recognize the ministry that is happening in the building process.

Wish List

Each camper writes a letter to themselves reminding them of commitments and friends that they made at camp. These are sent in December. We send a lot of letters.

- Stamps and #6 3/4 envelopes
- 2 Eureka Timberline 4 man tents
- Bibles to give away to campers who do not own one of their own.
- $300 dollars to go towards a Gaga ball pit

Right to Left - Brayden Meyers, Blaze Killian, Mike Meyers and Brad Carlson install the heating tubing in the Great Room.
Rachel Winters
Staff: 1988
Hometown: Marion, South Dakota
Rachel now lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Have you ever wondered what happened to the staff members of your youth? I reconnected with former staff members and will put some of their stories in each newsletter. Enjoy reconnecting!

What are some of your memories of Swan Lake?

Wow! There are so many; it is difficult to pin down just a few. I enjoyed the planned staff meetings before and “spontaneous debriefing” meetings after each camp session. It was a great time of fellowship. There was a hammock between two trees that someone would often end up tied up in during these sessions. One of the biggest highlights was taking the ninth graders to Newton Hills for a campout, as well as canoeing across the lake with them for ice cream. Fourth grade camp also really sticks in my memory from that year. Those kids were so enthusiastic about everything and so open. I loved Crazy Singing, both as a camper and as a staffer. But of everything, the best part will always remain campfires—the quietness in which you could hear the flames crackling, the wonderful guitar music and singing, and oh the singing. It was a wonderful time of reflection on the day God created and the lives He touched that day and a time of prayer for the campers that they would continue to allow God to work in their lives.

What did you learn from your time at Swan Lake?

Being a Swan Lake staffer taught me to have confidence in leadership, because I was put into situations where I had to lead: teaching morning sessions and leading Crazy Singing and campfires. Those were real stretches for me, but, as I did those things each week, I gained confidence. I am now in a management position where the skill of planning ahead and not being afraid to stand up in front of people has helped me tremendously. All my times at Swan Lake helped to shape who I have become spiritually. Because of being separated from the busyness and trappings of "regular" life, they were times when I was able to quiet my mind and soul and hear what the Holy Spirit had to say to my heart. I didn't realize it at the time, but now, years later, I can see that it is part of what has shaped me into who I am today.
Swan Lake Christian Camp began in the late 1930's as the inspiration of a number of Baptist congregations in and around the Southeastern part of South Dakota. In 1955, the Northern District Conference of General Conference Mennonites purchased the camp and held youth camps for many years. One of the big decisions at that time was to not change the name to Swan Lake Mennonite Camp. The camp has remained a regional camp, in part, because of being named a “Christian” camp. Today, summer camp programming is offered for Pre-K through High School and between 550 and 600 youth attend each summer. At least 10% of the kids do not list any home church affiliation. Swan Lake Christian Camp also hosts another 400 youth for groups that choose to provide their own programming.

Jerry and Judi Kroeker were hired as directors in 1997. They have provided consistent leadership and a vision for upgrading the facilities with the goal of reaching more people with the gospel message of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Almost ten years ago, Jerry began articulating the need for more adult space at Swan Lake Christian Camp. In January 2013, the board of directors met and decided to take a huge step in faith. Blue prints had been prepared and the total cost of the project was estimated at $1 million. Terry Schultz, from Avon, SD, and a former camper, had offered to donate all of the concrete and the labor to pour it. Three different people were willing to do the excavation and site preparation. Only $65,000 had been raised, but the board voted unanimously to begin this project with the express goal of building with no debt. Volunteers have worked along with skilled contractors to help keep costs down. Countless incidents of people stepping up at just the right time give testimony of God’s unfailing goodness. Rob, a local plumber, offered to do the plumbing. His boss, a Sioux Falls plumbing contractor, agreed to hold the license for this project if Rob was willing to donate all of his time. Others have volunteered to hang sheetrock or clean up after the workers have made a mess. Several times, high school youth have called to help. All of the workers, paid or volunteer, have eaten their meals with the camp staff. Prayers are said before meals. Meal time conversations often center around topics of Christian faith regardless of whether the workers have previously expressed a faith in Jesus Christ or not. Already, the message of Jesus Christ’s faithfulness is being told.

The Retreat Center will have 16 guest rooms with two queen sized beds and bath facilities in each room. There are also two large meeting rooms, a conference room, a kitchen, two additional suites and a prayer chapel. The suites are designed to provide temporary living space possibly for foreign missionaries on furlough or for pastors wanting to do individual retreats for themselves. The facility is expressly designed to accommodate adults and families. Swan Lake Christian Camp already has 150 beds for youth camps. There is a strong feeling that “adults need Jesus, too.”

To date, over $350,000 have been spent on the retreat center with no debt incurred. Since so much labor has been donated, the project is coming in well below its estimated cost. It is estimated that another $200,000 is required to get the facility usable. This figure does not include furnishing all of the rooms, but does represent a usable, finished space. When each of the 16 rooms is sponsored for $12,500, the Retreat Center will reach its current goal of $200,000. We would like for you to prayerfully consider sponsoring one or more of these rooms and partner with us to begin providing ministries to strengthen and encourage adults in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jerry Kroeker