



Viborg, South Dakota

August, 2021

605-326-5690



Summer Praises



We have so many reasons to be thankful!

We experienced the love of Christ in so many ways and through so many different people this camp season.

We were protected from major injuries and illnesses in our staffers and campers throughout the summer.

We watched as God provided for us in both physical and spiritual needs.

We were grateful for sunny and warm weather throughout all of our camps.

We were blessed to meet and serve so many kids of all ages.

We know that these are answers to many of your prayers, and we thank you for interceding on our behalf.



It's just a waterslide!

In case we haven't met yet, let me introduce myself. My name is Kianne Gilles (pronounced like the Cayenne pepper), and I am the new program director here at Swan Lake Christian Camp. I'm married to Kenny and have two daughters, Amera (age 9) and Makaya (age 5). We live just outside of Chancellor.

Since this was my first summer as program director and realistically, my first summer at camp in general, I had no idea what to expect. I came knowing that I love God, and I want to be obedient to everything He is asking me to do. Accepting this way of life called camp was simply my way of stepping out of the boat and walking toward my Jesus.

I was not disappointed with my first summer. God showed up for me in so many amazing ways. And while I made mistakes and sometimes felt like I was sinking, I experienced the loving care of Jesus as He would reach out and rescue me. I also learned so much. I learned to pray more and to rely on God's provision instead of my own strength. One of my frequent prayers this summer was for God to open my eyes to His joy. Throughout the summer, God answered this prayer over and over. One of my favorites, however, was through the waterslide. Realistically, the waterslide is just an oversized tarp with sprinklers and dish soap, but the laughter, smiles and joy was so contagious. For some it was just a waterslide, but to me it was a beautiful display of God's joy!



Wish List

- 2 new sit on kayaks (think end of summer sales)
- Funds for 52 additional dining room chairs
- Donations for new cabin construction (\$50,000 total)
- New or gently used electric golf cart.

Holy Spirit
Holy, Amazing
Caring, Loving, Inspiring
Redeemer of my soul
Jesus

~4th Grade Chapel Activity~

*Be Still and Know that
He is God:*

*Rest, Fellowship and
Grow*

Mission Statement

Spencer Wirth

This past summer at Swan Lake Christian Camp (SLCC) was by far the best summer of my life. It was such a blessing to be able to witness God working in many ways throughout the summer. My position at SLCC was that of a full-time staffer. There was a total of six young adults on staff this year and they quickly became my best friends. It was such a blessing to be able to meet and work with such amazing individuals. The relationships that we built and the memories we made will be with me for the rest of my life.

The summer started off with a couple weeks of camp maintenance. While the list was long and a little daunting at the start, we got it done quickly and enjoyed doing it. The first few weeks of the summer were an excellent time to get to know my fellow staffers and start building the relationships that would help us rely on each other throughout the camp season.

The first few camps we had were Camp Achieve, which consisted of adults with disabilities, and day camps, which had kids ranging from pre-school to second grade. My favorite memory from Camp Achieve was the joy and excitement they experienced when they caught a fish. My favorite memories from the day camps were when the kids would scream for me to dump buckets of water on them.

After the day camps we started having multi-day camps. These camps started off with third grade and went all the way up to senior high. My responsibilities for these camps consisted of planning and leading morning devotion, washing dishes, leading fun activities, lifeguarding, planning and leading evening recreation, and planning and leading nightly campfire. Overall, I think my biggest responsibility as a staff member was showing the campers the love of Christ. Showing campers the love of God and being a good example for them was by far the most important part of the summer.

I had so many amazing memories from these multi-day camps. One of the most amazing things that happened to me this summer was when God fulfilled a desire of my heart that I didn't even know I had. He gave me the opportunity to teach kids my favorite hobby of playing disc golf (a.k.a. frisbee golf). Every week I got to share my passion of disc golf with the campers while also sharing my passion for Jesus. It was such a blessing. My other favorite time of camp was our nightly campfires. Campfire was a time for the staff to share life experiences alongside Scripture to teach the campers about God. These campfires were a blessing not only to the campers but the counselors and staff as well. Each night was special, and we were able to witness the power of God through these campfires night after night.

Unfortunately, I cannot possibly explain in one page how amazing this summer was. The work of God was evident in everything I experienced this summer. SLCC was the answer to so many of my prayers. I got to experience God in a way I never thought possible. I got to share my love of Christ with children, something I hope to continue doing in my future. Finally, God surrounded me with an amazing group of people that will always have a special place in my heart. I cannot thank God enough for bringing me to camp this summer. I have never seen the love of God so clearly in my life. He is truly a wonderful Father.



Filling Bunks: 2016 Newsletter Article

The Swan Lake Christian Camp board of directors met for a regularly scheduled meeting on September 10th, 2016. Much of what is discussed at these meetings follows a pattern tied into the seasons. This time of year, the board reviews the summer program, looks at maintenance projects for the winter, questions the financial health of the camp and such like. This year, the board members were asked to define the purpose of SLCC. Among the usual answers which include a well run summer camping program, providing a space where our guests can feel the presence of Jesus Christ, building leaders among our counselors and summer staff, and being financially responsible, Nola Connor, board member from Alcester, SD, articulated this thought: We are in the business of filling celestial bunks. The idea that we need to fill even more of our bunks at camp had arisen from the financially prudent train of thought. Now, we look at our goal through a different lens. We do understand that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to draw people into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We also recognize that scripture commands us to proclaim the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

What changes when we emphasize filling celestial bunks? This is not an excuse to allow camper registration numbers to decline and say that we are more concerned with conversion experiences. As the director at Swan Lake for the past twenty years, I have always cautioned our staff to not count the number of kids who make a decision for Jesus at camp. Many people, including parents and pastors, Sunday school teachers and peers, have encouraged these kids, in many cases, for a very long time. Camp is a setting where kids often feel comfortable talking about their faith and decisions are sometimes announced while at camp. Let us not forget the role of the Holy Spirit.

Again, we circle back to the celestial bunks. Is it possible that Christian camping can look different than it does today? Are we set on patterns that worked well in the past? The board of directors is openly asking these types of questions. Now, I believe that Swan Lake Christian Camp has a strong youth camping program. This question draws us toward discussions of how to best use the new Still Waters Retreat Center. It also draws us to consider how we reach out to other ethnic groups and how we frame the stories of God's acts of mercy towards those of us who have come to know Him deeper at the campfire circle.

Join us in prayerful contemplation as the board of directors gives leadership on the direction of the camp.

Filling Bunks: 2021 Newsletter Article

I included the previous newsletter article because sometimes it is good to look back at what was important in a previous season. We had just completed the Still Waters Retreat Center which had been nearly all consuming for me. Now we were refocusing on the youth camps as we sought to hire a new program director and wondering exactly what the future would hold for SLCC.

Jumping forward to 2021, we are again looking back as we try to anticipate the future. This year we had nearly 100 more kids attending summer camp than we have had in the past 25 years. That averages roughly 20 more kids each week. During Junior High camp, we housed more than 20 boys in the basement of the retreat center as every other cabin space was filled. For two other weeks, we were stretched to find adequate cabin space for all of the kids. God's blessings were clearly evident. I believe that some of the influx is due to the virus last year. I also believe that when we keep our primary focus on sharing Christ that this growth will continue into the future.

At our July board meeting, plans were approved to build two additional cabins on the south side of the camp and if time allows, to modify the former bathhouse so that it can be used as a cabin on the north side. As we look to the future, we will need to consider updates to our oldest cabins just to keep them functional. I am also pondering the possibility of rebuilding the chapel so that it could include cabin or guest space in lieu of major renovations to South Stone Cabin. This idea would include a larger meeting space that would also allow for inclement weather activities.

We have several groups that are already taxing the space in Still Waters Retreat Center. The 2021 calendar shows us hosting 125 groups on 46 weekends. This fall, we show only one open weekend before Thanksgiving. This does not mean that every space is full, but nearly. For example, this weekend, we have two overnight family reunions, a college leaders event for 70+ college students, another family reunion picnic and a Sunday church service all held here at camp. I am really excited that more and more we are attracting ministry intensive events as this is at the heart of why we are here.

As the ministry of the camp continues to expand, I want to thank you for your willingness to dream big dreams and your recognition that God directs us to reach out and share the good news of Jesus Christ with all people. Our mission to fill celestial bunks is exciting as we strive to be good stewards of all that God has given us.