



September 30, 2025

Viborg, South Dakota

605-326-5690

As I was beginning to put this newsletter together, I came across a note that I had written back in 2021, just as the Covid-19 year was beginning to fade. It still applies to me as I try to provide leadership here at the camp.

I was speaking with a church denominational leader about the financial uncertainty of this past year. Informally, he spoke with area pastors about their level of fear or anxiety about meeting their respective budgets. Those with higher anxiety ended the year in a deficit position while those who believed that Jesus Christ was more than able to handle their financial situations and continued to preach a message of hope in Christ not only met their budgets, but were unanimously in a better position than last year. This past year, I have been squarely on the fence, at times feeling much anxiety as groups continued to cancel and other times feeling that God was doing something miraculous here at camp. In the end, God showed his faithfulness yet again. I ask each of you to retrieve a stone from the middle of this past year and pile them in a manner that will cause you and your children to remember the stories of God miraculous faithfulness. Then, when time blurs the details, we can look back and know with confidence that we serve a good Lord.

The most important message that I can share with you is that Jesus loves you so much that he lived the life that he wants each of us to live, he died the death that each of us deserve, and that he rose again to demonstrate his authority and he is asking each of us to trust him. I see time after time the evidence of lives lived in the fullness of that trust. At the camp, I am often involved in messy situations, whether it be maintenance issues or the lives of people that I come in contact with. In these situations, where I don't see a clear path that leads to bliss, my desire is to imitate Jesus, seek wisdom and trust that he knows what is best. This is a process that I don't always do well. I certainly hope that in those situations that I repent quickly so that I don't need to continue in the mire. I believe that the mindset to trust keeps our focus on what is important and eternal.

I want you to know that the camp is doing well, often in spite of its director. I believe that it is doing well because the hearts of our board of directors and our staff seek constantly to follow Jesus. I see his hand in so many daily occurrences and I look for him in each of our guests. Praise God for his continued blessing and thank you for your continued prayers. - Jerry



Central Plains Mennonite Women's Retreat

Some of the ladies from CPMC women's retreat were able to take a sunset ride around the lake Saturday evening. As one of two token men at the camp that weekend along with Luke, our program director, I enjoyed my interactions with these ladies. Heidi Greenwood Doell was their presenter and I had known her from Bethel College. Others in attendance had been campers or counselors at Swan Lake many years ago and shared of their experiences. There were several ladies that had never been to camp before. The time of reflection and building community was incredible. It was obvious that what bound all of these ladies together was their common desire to grow closer to Jesus. Our hope is that this group continues to grow and that they fill the still under construction Worship Center for many years to come.

This year's fundraiser will help to complete the Worship Center. As of the September financial report to the board of directors, we have spent just over \$600,000 on this project. One commercial contractor estimated that we have more than double that amount of value which is attributed to a lot of donated labor. Praise God for that. I believe that we need another \$350,000 to complete the upper level and the offices. Our goal would be to connect the two buildings next year. That part of the project will involve extensive plumbing and creative framing. I believe that part will cost another \$150,000. The great need will only increase the celebration when God provides for this project which I firmly believe He planted in our hearts. Come and celebrate His goodness.



Sunday, November 23rd

6:00 PM

RSVP to 605-326-5690

Enjoy a great meal, live music, and fellowship.

Worship Center

The Worship Center has become one of my primary focuses over the last two years. When I first began to suggest that we were going to need larger spaces for worship and dining, one of our staff members pointed out that already our dining hall was routinely over crowded. The need was already present. We already served some meals each season in shifts to accommodate the size of the groups attending camp. We also filled the chapel space and looked for creative ways to get everyone in. When I consider these groups, the ones that challenge us for space the most are the ministry intensive groups that we host. Occasionally, we have requests to hold weddings or even a couple of memorial services, but these are not central to our focus here at camp. For the past several years, we have been hosting six or eight ministry intensive groups of adults that fill most of the bottom bunks even in the cabins. We would love to accommodate more of these types of groups. Right now, most of our calendar is booked two years out. This new Worship Center will allow us to continue to work with groups whose first love is Jesus. The quilters and craft groups pay a lot of our bills, but it is the ministry groups that we are striving to accommodate.



Our goal from the beginning was to build with the financial resources that are available. So far, we continue to build debt free. We have made arrangement to borrow if the need arises and we would borrow to complete a time sensitive portions of the whole project. However, our preference is to not be a slave to debt. As I mentioned in the blurb about our fall fundraiser, we have already spent over \$600,000 and volunteers have contributed a lot as well. I like to say that much of the basement concrete was wheel barrowed in by fourteen of my closest former friends. It really was a lot of work and I think the friendships were restored by the time the concrete hardened. But the satisfaction just a couple hours later was also tremendous. I realize that there are quicker ways to build a worship center, but the stories of God's faithfulness, his provision and his timing are worth so much.



The Worship Center construction continues with a lot of sheetrock being hung. Work is being done now to complete the in-floor heating system so that we can continue building this winter. Much of the wiring is complete along with the insulation. Within the next couple of weeks we will begin painting the dining room and the worship space. We are also working to complete the sheetrock in the Welcome center offices. Ordinarily, I think that I would be feeling anxious about the money needed to complete this project. But I really have a sense of peace towards the process. God planted this project in my mind and in my heart. If it is his project, then it will be completed in his timing. If it is just my project, then it will stall out and it will be obvious to everyone. I ask for your continued prayers for the safety of the laborers, for the funding and especially pray for the selection of the proper paint colors. If you wish to contribute financially to this project, your donations can be tax deductible. Grain checks through your local elevators is another way to help complete the Worship Center. Contact the camp if you have questions at (605) 326-5690. I would love to give anyone a tour to anyone if you are interested in seeing the progress thus far.





summer 2025

Our summer bible theme was “The Way” based on John 14:6. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” We acknowledged that everywhere we look, the world is trying to provide meaning and purpose apart from God. Our true purpose is found only by looking to Jesus as our example, our savior and our hope for eternal life. My uncle had a fence at the end of his long driveway that showed three signs; “one way”, “other way” and one pointing up to heaven, that read “the way”. This visual reminder from my childhood influenced our discussions of where we look for our ultimate meaning and purpose. While we still experienced rainy days and other disappointments, much of the time was spent building incredible friendships, singing together, fishing, playing games and trying to be like Jesus to those who were with us at camp each week.



700 children attended the camps sponsored by Swan Lake Christian Camp. Still others attended one of several camps hosted here each summer. This number is not quite the biggest number of kids, but it still shows tremendous growth in our youth programming over the past several years. Often times, the dining hall was completely packed with loud and excited kids. Our bible leaders did such a great job of presenting Jesus in age appropriate ways to kids from the 5 and 6 year old day campers through our high school aged young people. The issues that they face change as they mature, but the message of faith in Jesus remains central to our teaching.

Our summer staff members really did enjoy their interactions with the campers. We strive each summer to select young people who love Jesus and care about others as our first criteria. Beyond that, we want them to have abundance of energy, be able to function on limited sleep, roast the perfect marshmallow and carry small children on their back. Consider applying for next summer if you think you have those attributes and abilities.

2026 Winter retreat dates

5th— 8th Grade January 9-11

8th—12th Grade January 16-18

Register at www.myslcc.com

