

Greetings from Camp!

In 2019, we undertook a significant realignment of our leadership team, organizational structure, and marketing strategies to address the financial burden caused by recent operating deficits and growing deferred maintenance costs. As a result, in January and February of 2020, we experienced significant growth in all three of our main revenue streams – program, hosted ministry (retreat rentals), and giving.

Then, in March, like the rest of the world, everything at camp came to a devastating halt. As of May, we projected a \$3 million loss in revenue to the ministry during 2020. On May 22, we canceled summer camp, a \$1.8 million loss. With our leadership team and improvements in place from work done in 2019, we quickly pivoted, adapted, and changed course.

Upon canceling summer camp, we launched a Light the Fire for Summer Camp 2021 fundraising appeal and raised over \$250,000 in one day during our very first ‘Day of Giving’ on July 29. We moved from 11 recurring/monthly givers to more than 200 by the end of 2020, an additional of \$200,000 of annual sustainable revenue to the ministry for long-term planning and impact. More than 450 new donors gave to the ministry for the first time. The response to our Light the Fire appeal has been overwhelmingly positive. By mid-May 2021, camp friends had gifted more than \$1.89 million toward our \$1.8 million goal. This amount includes increased giving from individuals and congregations across the southeast. We received additional support from the NC Synod Peeler Casey Endowment and a legacy gift from Holy Cross Lutheran, Marietta, GA, after a holy closure.

Upon the cancellation of summer camp, we immediately intensified our on-line engagement with virtual cabin times, vespers, and ministry impact stories. We opened our sites safely and marketed to families and small groups for their emotional and spiritual well-being during the pandemic. Families who requested them received ‘camp in a box’ during their visits. We secured a contract with the Asheville YMCA for 75-100 children per day five days per week to have socially distanced remote learning at Lutheridge for the current school year . . . and many more positive accomplishments.

At the Board level, we quickly formed a Cash Flow Task Force that helped navigate these trying times and monitor cash position to ensure we had the funds each week and month to pay the bills and make payroll. This Task Force also offered guidance and supported us in extremely difficult and painful expense-cutting plans. Some of these included:

1. reducing payroll by 10% for all staff,
2. freezing all pension contributions,
3. furloughing employees whose areas were inactive during the pandemic,

4. eliminating positions affected by the pandemic,
5. putting into effect a hiring freeze for all open positions,
6. cutting all non-essential spending,
7. shopping and renegotiating all vendor and service-provider relationships to cut costs,
8. liquidating older equipment and vehicles to reduce maintenance and insurance expenses.

These expense cuts, together with strong fundraising, creative problem-solving, and adaptive changes implemented by our team, allowed us to cover our top line registration losses during fiscal year 2020 almost dollar for dollar. (Note: At the time this report for 2020 was written, March 2021, some cuts have been restored and our furloughed staff brought back to prepare for summer camp. While we have restored budgeted payroll for all employees, we are still operating with less than our full complement of staff, with plans in place to remedy this reality as cash flow improves.)

Ministry & Site Updates:

Despite the pandemic closures, there are events to celebrate at our sites.

- **Lutheridge:** In February, we celebrated the work of both Pastor Tim and Pastor Mary Canniff-Kuhn as more than 500 past summer staff gathered for sending worship in the Faith Center. During the school year, 75-100 YMCA children received support for virtual school, making it possible for parents to continue working during these difficult times.
- **Lutherock:** In partnership with a major donor, the 600 *laricobius nigrinus* beetles released last year are doing their job to keep the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid threat to the hemlock trees under control. A new SALT, Servant Adventure Leadership Training program was developed for launch in summer 2021 to recruit high schoolers interested in serving on staff at Lutherock during college. And Jen Bacher, Lutherock Program Director, was approved for ordination to word and service by the North Carolina Synod. Jen's service of ordination will be at Lutherock in April of 2021.
- **Luther Springs:** We made significant progress on moving the long-awaited Atonement Chapel building project toward completion. This chapel was the last Mission Possible project, held up by permitting in the recent past. There are plans to use the new Chapel in 2021.
- **Lutheranch:** We scheduled an official Barn Grand Opening for March 2020. We rescheduled due to health and safety concerns and held the event virtually in September. Horses arrived at Lutheranch early in the year. Because horses are outside and more than 6-feet in length, we officially launched Lutheranch's Equestrian Program. We now offer trail rides, therapeutic riding lessons, regular riding lessons, and more.
- **Welcome Statement:** During the March 2020 meeting of the board held at Lutherock, the board adopted the following welcome statement: *At NovusWay Ministries, we welcome all who seek God's love and grace in an outdoor ministry setting. We welcome all as God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, family status, socio-economic circumstances, physical or mental abilities, or citizenship. Our unity is in Christ.*

- **Planned Giving:** During 2020, 10 individuals/couples took the necessary steps to include NovusWay in their charitable estate plans, either by working with one of our ELCA Gift Planners or working with our development staff.

We acknowledge that the loss of a summer of camp was devastating. Not only were we not able to gather in a time when we needed community the most, but we also lost a summer of faith formation for campers and leadership development for young adults. As we turn our hope toward summer camp 2021, we will continue to work with our camp friends, congregations, and synods to strengthen the ministry and welcome you all back at camp safely. We remain grateful for your support of and partnership in this important work that God has given us to do . . . together. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,



Boyd W. Harris, IV
Executive Director-CEO



Charles R. Bridgers
President, Board of Trustees