

The Link to a Place Apart



MAGICAL

“When my pastor told me there was a camp in North Carolina in the middle of the woods I said, ‘Whoa, that sounds amazing! I love the woods!’” That’s how Hazelle, a high school camper from Tampa, Florida, first learned about Lutherock and why she was so eager to go and see what it was all about.

While she was eager, going to Lutherock for the first time was a big deal for Hazelle. “It was my first time away from my mom for a week and going outside the state made it even more huge,” Hazelle says. “Being at Lutherock was very different and a little shocking. In the city you don’t experience so much nature. It was amazing to be able to see and smell the trees when you wake up.”

Being in the woods for the week gave Hazelle lots of time to see and appreciate new things. “It was so environmentally different and so peaceful,” Hazelle says. “It blew me away how peaceful things can be. We got to see so many animals like deer and salamanders. It’s so magical that God creates all that.”

Hazelle says her camp counselors have been really important to her experience at Lutherock. “I felt like I was really cared for by my counselors,” she says. “You can

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A Message From The CEO



Dear friends,

Do you know the sound? The frogs start up down by the water, and the crickets join in. A cabin is laughing. Somewhere a group is singing on the walk back from vespers. Then it goes quiet, and even the quiet feels full. Camp is alive, and I believe that is God speaking through creation.

You'll hear it in this issue's stories. Tyshaun couldn't sleep his first nights at Luther Springs because the woods were so loud, and now he loves it. Hazelle soaked up God's love through the sound of rain at Lutherock. And Sheri walked Lutheridge every morning at a quilt retreat this August, 65 years after her first summer as a camper. She said it plainly: "God is still there."

I love that about these places. Buildings get updated and programs grow, and every year brings new faces. But, summer or winter, camp still feels like camp. It's familiar. It's comforting. It's the place you come home to.

We held onto that as we updated our strategic plan. We set specific goals under six pillars, which you can read about on page 7. Every goal points to the same place: bringing people closer to God and one another, now and for years to come.

We've laid out quarterly milestones, and I'm excited about the steps we've already taken. We hired a new Chief Marketing Officer, Carter Blend, to help bring more people to all three sites. We also redesigned the Lutheridge/Lutherock program team. Pastors Sara and Drew Yoos now lead programming at both sites, and two new team members have joined them. Mac Feid will be the program lead for Lutherock, and Livi Iobst will take on several initiatives at Lutheridge. All four will work at both camps.

At Luther Springs, we're close to finishing a new business plan that will carry us through Sarah Anderson's retirement. If you've been to Luther Springs in the past 20 years, Sarah has reminded you, "Jesus loves you." Please join us on February 20 at Luther Springs to celebrate her. Watch our social media and email for details.

I hope to see you this spring, too. We will host donor gatherings at Luther Springs on April 10 and at Lutheridge on April 24. Mark your calendar now – details coming soon.

Come hear the frogs for yourself.

With gratitude,
Lauri SoJourney
CEO, NovusWay Ministries

tell that we matter to them and that they enjoy everything that they're doing and having fun with us." This summer, the devotional times led by Hazelle's counselor Riley were especially meaningful to Hazelle. "One of the nights we went out and sat under the pavilion while it was raining," Hazelle remembers. "We were there just relaxing and thinking and praying. We talked about how God created all things good, including us. I felt like I was soaking up so much of nature and God's love."

Hazelle's mom Kimberly remembers what Hazelle said when she got back from Lutherock. "She told me when she came home that she felt so much closer to God than she ever had been," Kimberly says. "Hazelle is very much an evangelist, and I knew she was going to use her camp experience to keep on spreading good news to others."

Since going to camp, Hazelle says she talks a lot about how good God's creation is. "That's one of the things I like to talk about with people," Hazelle says. "I brought back stories and games and songs from camp that I get to share with my church and my friends. But I especially brought back my excitement for appreciating God's creation."

The love Hazelle felt at Lutherock continues to shape her life. "I got to hear about how much God loves me and it's just astounding," Hazelle shares. "I hope that in a few years I can be a Lutherock counselor. Camp has made me feel so loved. I want everyone to be able to feel that love from God so they can love others and God's creation too."

Your gifts to NovusWay give campers like Hazelle experiences in God's creation that deepen faith and empower joyful witness. We are grateful you are a part of this ministry where lives are transformed for love and service.



The Lutheridge 75th Birthday Capital Campaign continues to inspire a season of renewal at Lutheridge. We are excited to share that toward our campaign goal of \$3.6 million we have received gifts and commitments of \$3.5 million! This outpouring of generosity has funded some transformational updates at camp, including the completion of the new Pioneer A cabins. Next, we are turning our attention to the final campaign projects – renovations in Efird Hall and Mission Hall. We are grateful for the ongoing gifts from individuals and congregations which are preparing Lutheridge for a faithful future of ministry.

To learn more about the campaign and how you can make a gift, contact Rev. Nathan Gragg, Chief Development Officer (NGragg@NovusWay.org, (828) 209-6326) or visit Lutheridge.org/Campaign.



AHA MOMENT

“Before coming to camp, I was a city boy. I had to get used to the bugs,” says Tyshaun Knight, a Luther Springs counselor for the last few summers.

Tyshaun was first invited to come to Luther Springs by his college roommate. “The first year he told me to come work at camp I said, ‘No, not a summer in the woods!’” Tyshaun laughs. “The second year he asked I said I’d do it. And I had an amazing summer!”

That first summer as a counselor took some adjustment according to Tyshaun. “It was my first time in the woods, and I couldn’t sleep at first,” Tyshaun says. “I had to get used to hearing night sounds. But after a couple of days, I was loving it here. Being out in nature grew on me, and so did the faith element of everything we did.”

Being in a new place with new people, Tyshaun wasn’t sure how he would fit in at first, but he soon experienced a deep sense of welcome. “This is one of the first places I felt totally accepted for who I am,” he says. “Everyone made me feel like family. Being one of the only people of color, I worried I wouldn’t have as much fun as I did. But having so much fun was a good surprise for me.”

Finding a place of welcome at camp has made Tyshaun passionate about the ways he helps others feel welcome at Luther Springs. “This is a place where you get to work with kids from all walks of life,” Tyshaun says. “You don’t know what people are going through so it’s important to give them space to be who they are. I want every camper who comes here to have a week of safe space.”

Tyshaun says his time at Luther Springs has changed the way he understands faith in God. “Camp is responsible for making me feel stronger in my faith,” Tyshaun

shares. “I’ll have moments when I am feeling worried and then I’ll hear a camp song playing in my head. A lot of what I talk about with friends back home about faith is what I learned at camp.”

Some of Tyshaun’s best moments at camp have been worshipping in the unique outdoor settings at Luther Springs. “Any time we get to do a worship element on the lake is an aha moment for me,” he says. “There is always something that happens or something that we see. That area is just blessed for faith. In this digital age, it’s so important to experience time where you are surrounded by nature, faith, and community.”

Your support of outdoor ministry at Luther Springs, Lutherock, and Lutheridge provides special times and sacred spaces for people of all ages to feel welcomed and blessed. Thank you for your gifts to NovusWay!



PATCH

As a summer camper for many years Sheri DeWitt remembers thinking, “I know God lives on this earth, and I know it’s in the mountains up at Lutheridge.”

Sheri first went to camp with other children from her church, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Aiken, South Carolina. “My first memories of Lutheridge were when other kids from church started talking about it,” Sheri recalls. “I wanted to go too but it wasn’t until I was 10 years old that I was allowed to go. I immediately fell in love with the place.”

One of the things that impressed Sheri during her first summer at camp was the

way the Lutheridge counselors cared for the campers. “It was very meaningful to have these college students who wanted people my age to have a good camp experience,” Sheri says. Because she had such a great time, Sheri went back every summer that she could. “I just loved being there and loved the atmosphere. I took girls from church or friends from school with me. I always wanted to go the first week of camp as soon as school was out.”

Sheri still remembers small but significant details of those summers. “I remember Mrs. Long saying, ‘Good morning campers. It’s a beautiful day at Lutheridge!’ every morning. I remember receiving the Order of the Wooden Spoon if everyone at my table cleaned their plate for the week in the dining hall. I remember walking to vespers two by two every night and having that time of spiritual connection with others.” What Sheri really remembers is the impact Lutheridge had on her faith as a young person. “Lutheridge was a place that strengthened the faith that had been built into me. I started to see it in action. I started to see there were other people around me from other places who felt the same way I did about faith and how God was working in our lives.”

Sheri went to camp for seven summers as a child, joyfully receiving her five-year patch along the way. In the years that followed, she only had a few opportunities to return, including visits with her women’s group. Then in August of this year, Sheri had the chance to return to Lutheridge for a quilt retreat. “It was wonderful to see everything. I enjoyed seeing the parts of camp that are the same as when I was young but also seeing parts that are updated to keep things ready for today’s campers,” Sheri says.

While at the quilting retreat, Sheri got to talk with Lutheridge Executive Director Van Van Horne. “I told Van about getting my five-year patch but never having the chance to get another. As we talked, we realized I’d had seven years as a camper, two at women’s retreats, and then my time there at the quilting retreat. Van said it was time for me to get my ten-year patch. So on my 75th birthday, I got my 10-year Lutheridge camper patch. That was very special to me.”

During her recent visit, Sheri also made time to walk around camp, taking in familiar sights and remembering the places that had shaped her as a young person. “I had a chance to walk every morning and look at so many familiar places,” Sheri says. “I especially remembered the places where I worshipped and the feeling I had sitting in those spaces. God is still there.”

National Estate Planning Awareness week is a meaningful time to plan for what matters most. By creating or updating your estate plans, you can care for your loved ones while ensuring the ministries of NovusWay make an impact in the lives of God’s children for years to come. Our partner, FreeWill, makes it simple, secure, and completely free.

To start your legacy plan or learn more, scan the code here
or visit <https://partner.freewill.com/novusway>



Where We're Headed

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Through the leadership of the NovusWay Board and staff we have updated our ministry's strategic plan, highlighting the following six pillars of our purpose and priorities. We are happy to share these with you so you can join in the holy work of strengthening the ministries of NovusWay.

SIX PILLARS

- 1. Strengthen Summer Camp.** Every child who comes to Lutheridge, Lutherock, or Luther Springs should find a place apart – safe, joyful, life-changing. We're growing camp so more kids get that experience, and making sure cost never stands in the way.
- 2. Strengthen Year-Round Programs.** Summer is where most people meet us, but our sites are alive all year – outdoor schools for students, retreats for adults, and programs that carry our mission into every season.
- 3. Strengthen Hosted Ministry.** Churches, conferences, and groups choose our sites because of how they're treated when they arrive. We're building a hosted ministry experience that's excellent at all three sites.
- 4. Strengthen Facilities.** Our buildings and grounds are the physical expression of our welcome. We're investing in the cabins, lodges, and land so they support the mission.
- 5. Build Financial Viability.** Financial health isn't the mission, but it's what makes the mission possible for the next generation. We're building toward zero debt and a \$10 million endowment by 2033.
- 6. Care for Staff.** God works through our people. We're committed to paying every staff member fairly, supporting them well, and building a place they want to stay.

HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF IT

- **Pray** for our campers, guests, and staff.
- **Give** toward this vision and the ministry that transforms lives.
 - **Tell** a family or a congregation about our programs.
- **Visit** and see for yourself at Lutheridge, Lutherock, or Luther Springs.



NovusWay Ministries

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