**Dave Kruger’s Story**

 What comes to mind when you hear the name Luther Springs? Ms Sarah’s cookies, craft, meaningful worship?

For many it’s Pastor Dave Kruger! From trekking a virgin forest near Hawthorne to visioning a site and ministry, to board leadership, to Grands Weekends, Dave’s “fingerprints” are all over Luther Springs. Luther Springs has a special place in his heart. It’s a life-long love of God’s Creation; and the joy found in bringing others to know and love the same God. Where best for this to happen than in God’s Creation at Luther Springs.

Pastor Kruger’s love for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries began with a childhood love of the outdoors. “I grew up on a family farm in eastern Iowa and hated leaving the farm to become a "city kid" when Dad quit farming, commuted to Wartburg Seminary, and was ordained. At age 6 I drove a team of horses and led the horse that pulled hay from the hay wagon up into the barn’s loft. Dad bought a tractor and by age 8, I drove it for harrowing and discing, even plowing the last year on the farm. All that time, with my Collie, Trixie, I rounded up purebred Angus cattle from the rugged, lower pasture and brought them up to the barnyard when Dad needed them. I fed hogs and milked the cow.”

A love of the outdoors followed Dave to God’s call to full-time service in the Church. He was ordained in 1962 by the Illinois Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America. His role in Luther Springs was shaped by calls as pastor/developer of Prince of Peace, Loveland, Ohio; St. Luke’s, Stevensville, Michigan; Lord of Life, Brighton, MI; and finally, Lord of Life, Plant City, FL in 1985.

At Lord of Life, Brighton he discovered outdoor ministry. His youth group spent a week each year at Michi-lu-ca. “My love of outdoor ministry began with Confirmation Camp at Michi-lu-ca”, he says. “We took young people every other year, combining 7th & 8th grade classes. Off years, I volunteered as Camp Chaplain. Introducing inner city Detroit youth to rural outdoors was a pleasure, sometimes a challenge.”

Dave’s call to Plant City, FL as pastor/developer also brought a surprise. “After all the years of outdoor ministry at Michi-lu-ca, I was surprised to find no Outdoor Ministry program in the Synod and no camp when I arrived in 1985. I became one of the founders of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Florida (LOMF) and Luther Springs. We stayed in tents. The bathhouse was the only permanent structure. We had programs around campfires. I shook my head in disbelief with the arrival of four single-wide mobile homes that became Kinports Center. I worked with others to purchase the Luther Springs site, build the Morgan Village cabins, the Kuehner Center and other housing, improve the devotional sites, improve and/or create trails, and expand programming for all ages.”

In 2010 Pastor Dick Hafer and Margo Walbolt introduced Dave and his wife, Debby, to the opportunity to bring grandchildren to experience God’s abundant love in God’s Creation at Luther Springs. “With support from Pastor Dick and Margo,” Dave recalls, “Debby and I began hosting Grands Weekends, inviting grandparents to bring grandchildren to Luther Springs to enjoy camp activities. We usually took five or six of our “grands” each year. In August 2011 we had seven for a camp weekend at our home because the Luther Springs weekend was cancelled. Thankfully, Grands Weekend at Luther Springs resumed in November 2011.” This popular family faith-sharing opportunity found its way to NovusWay’s other ministry sites and is available at various times of the year.

Dave and Debby’s activity in God’s creation and Luther Springs is limited now. But their support of this ministry is not. These days the two find joy in their regular monthly support of Luther Springs, a support that’s unending. Luther Springs is in their legacy plan. Looking back over a life-long love of God’s Creation and Lutheran outdoor ministries, Dave confesses: “We wouldn’t have it any other way. It's been a journey and a ministry of personal growth and adventure shared with many others who believe in the personal and spiritual blessings of outdoor ministry.”

We thank God for each of you who, like Dave and Debby, support God’s work of changing lives and forming faith in people of all ages at NovusWay’s four ministry sites, Luther Springs, Lutheridge, Lutherock and Lutheranch.

To learn more about ways you can [support camp](https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E5162&id=46), contact Senior Development Officer, Rev Jan Setzler at jsetzler@novusway.org or 864-942-2974.

