

# The Link to a Place Apart



## LITTLE MOMENTS

“This is truly where God wants me to be,” says Megan Shackelford, a fifth-grade math and science teacher in Florida. “I cannot imagine myself anywhere else.”

Megan has always wanted to be a teacher, but her experiences on staff at Lutherock were foundational for her journey to being an educator. “It takes a lot to get in front of 10-year-olds every day and have them listen to you,” Megan says. “I gained that kind of confidence at camp.”

Megan grew up going to summer camp at Lutherock and Lutheridge. Becoming a counselor was a childhood dream come true, but it was also challenging. “I tended to be very soft spoken and hesitant to try new things when I arrived for my first summer, so I was nervous about everything,” Megan says. That summer, Megan benefitted from the mentorship of experienced counselors. “They helped me see that being your best, quirky self is exactly what God put you on earth to be,” Megan shares. “By the end of the summer, I realized ‘I’ve got this!’ Camp really helped me become a more confident and stronger version of myself.”

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# A Message From The INTERIM CO-CEOS



“Don’t look back. You’re not going that way.” So much of our energy during a “new year” can be focused on the past year. We watch the clock tick toward a new year and long to put any difficulty behind us.

Our hope and challenge for 2025 are grounded in a new strategic plan we are undertaking as a ministry. This plan will help us better see the way we are going, moving us into the future and toward who God is calling us to be for this moment.

To date, you have helped with this plan by providing 586 survey responses, many one-on-one interviews, and a CEO think tank, all tackling critical high-level questions.

- How can we foster vibrant faith community in a changing world?
- How do we position ourselves to lift up programs for children, youth, families, and adults that build community and introduce people to a loving God?
- What does it mean to be a place apart in 2025?
- How do we fund ministry creatively so we can keep our programs accessible to a lonely and disconnected world?

These are big questions we have known were coming for years and we are eager to begin mapping out our answers.

This year we look to the stories of faith formation, leadership growth, and spiritual renewal, the kinds of stories shared in this LINK. These stories give witness to our unwavering commitment to foster strong and healthy community at camp.

This year we lean more deeply into our WHY - why we love camp, why we come back, why we invite others. Thank you for sharing your camp “whys” through this strategic planning process. We are using your responses to shape “the way we are going next.” As we finalize the plan, we will share it with this community.

Thank you for a strong 2024. Here’s to an even stronger and future focused 2025.

Warmly,

Mike

Mitzie



It was also important to Megan to be the kind of supportive and nurturing counselor that she had when she was a camper. “I remembered what it was like for me when I went to camp,” Megan recalls. “As a camper, being in an environment where it was okay to ask questions was valuable to me. Camp was a place where I learned to appreciate God in the little moments and really be more aware of God’s presence. That made me more aware of God in the everyday moments of my life. As a counselor, I wanted to provide a safe space for others to experience that like I had.”

As a teacher, Megan still relies on many of the skills and lessons she learned as a Lutherock counselor. “At camp, I got to see kids of all ages interact with each other out of the classroom,” she says. “Getting to be around children all summer helped me understand what motivates them and how they like to have fun. I constantly use camp games and activities in the classroom, especially when we are stuck inside for recess.”

Megan considers her work as a teacher to be a calling, a place where she can live out her faith. “Every day I get to show God’s love to my students. They have all kinds of needs and it’s really amazing to get to be God’s presence in their lives.”

Your gifts to NovusWay give young adults opportunities to grow in faith, gain confidence, and use the skills they learn at camp in a variety of vocations. Thank you for helping raise up the leaders our world needs.



## **SPARKS**

““This ministry gives us an opportunity to make a connection between our church and new neighbors,” says Pastor John Futterer. “We have a responsibility

to get outside of our walls, and Lutheridge is helping us do that.”

John serves at Kimball Memorial Lutheran Church in Kannapolis, North Carolina. For many years, Kimball has had a close relationship with a local elementary school, supporting teachers and students at the school through special projects during the year. More recently, leaders at the church started to wonder if there was a way to provide a week at camp to some of the students.

“Our relationship with the school was an important way for the congregation to be involved in the community,” says John, “and a natural extension of our school relationships would be to bring children to Lutheridge.” After lots of conversations with teachers and staff from the school and informational meetings with parents, Kimball registered and brought their first group in the summer of 2018. Since then, the program has grown.

“It was a hard sell the first year and the families were reluctant,” says Jodie Hott, one of the leaders of Kimball’s camp ministry. “But families saw how much the kids loved their time at camp, and the word got out that this is a great experience to be a part of.” In 2024, Kimball brought 20 children from the local school to camp. They are making plans to bring another big group in 2025.

Jodie sees the way a week at Lutheridge makes an impact on children from the community. “Being at camp gives them sparks, ideas that they can bring home,” she says. “They use camp prayers for family mealtime. They share their highs and lows with their family. I’ve even had kids tell me that camp has made them think about their friendships differently. It shows them how they can be God’s hands and feet at home and at school.”

Kimball’s camp ministry has had a significant impact on the congregation too. “It’s made people in our church realize how important camp can be in the life of a child,” Jodie says. “Hearing stories from our week at camp helps people see what an important ministry this is to these families.”

John agrees and says, “These are new ways of us reaching out to the community. In a changing community we need to be a changing church. Camp has given us a great way to do that. I have loved Lutheridge since I started going in 1985. The impact it is having on our outreach ministry has made me grow to love Lutheridge even more.”



## OCEAN

Luther Springs counselor Ricky remembers what his camper Jack\* was like when he arrived last summer. Jack was a part of a group that traveled from out of state to participate in a Disaster Response program on the Florida Gulf Coast, an experience that seemed to put Jack outside of his comfort zone.

“He was very stand-offish when he first arrived,” Ricky recalls. “He had never done disaster work before and wasn’t really sure what this trip was supposed to be for him. He wasn’t eager to participate at first and didn’t really want to be there.”

When the group began to drive out to places in the community where they would be serving, Jack began to see first-hand the hurricane devastation that was all around. “Jack later told me that he wasn’t aware such damage was even possible,” Ricky remembers. “What we saw really affected him and made him start to pay attention to people and what they had been through.”

At a food pantry near the beach, a local volunteer shared how the day after the hurricane moved through, they opened the food pantry and gave away all the food inside to anyone who needed it. “I noticed that story really started to open Jack’s eyes to what we were doing that week,” Ricky says.

Seeing the needs of the community wasn’t the only experience that had an impact on Jack. The opportunity to gather in unique ways for faith conversations was important too. “One afternoon our service project finished early, so we went to the beach,” Ricky recalls. “We decided to go in the water and have a Bible study right there. Floating around in the ocean and talking about God is so different than sitting in a church. For Jack, that really connected him to his faith in a powerful way.”



As the week went on Ricky says Jack started to open up and became an entirely different person. “He really started listening to the people in the community and was interested in their stories,” Ricky says. “He became more engaged with the group too. He was the first to answer questions and was eager to help out any way he could. And the more he was into it, the more his friends got into it too. He really became a leader in that way.”

At the end of the week, Jack shared his gratitude for the experiences he had. “I didn’t realize how much faith means to people in need,” Jack told Ricky. “They’ve lost so much, and yet they’re still hopeful. This week has shown me what faith is all about.”

Thank you for your gifts to NovusWay which give campers like Jack the opportunity to grow as they serve those recovering from disasters. Disaster Response weeks resume at all NovusWay camps this summer as we continue to serve those affected by hurricanes Helene and Milton.

*\* Camper named changed for privacy.*



## LUMBERJACKS

When Chris Hegele saw the pictures of devastation at Lutheridge and Lutherock last fall, he called camp and asked, “Where do you need us most?”

The “us” Chris was asking about was the Lutheridge Lumberjacks, a group of volunteers who have been coming to camp for years to do maintenance projects and get camp ready for summer. Since 2007, the Lumberjacks have been a regular work crew at Lutheridge and Lutherock. “We get a lot of work done, but we have a lot of fun doing it,” Chris says.

Chris served on staff at Lutheridge for several summers while in college. “Camp was always a second home to me,” Chris shares. “Working there meant you were family. It didn’t matter your background or where you were from, everyone came together to be immersed in love.” Chris says his time as a counselor taught him important lessons about leadership and how to get along with people. “I was a Resident Assistant in college and it didn’t go too well the first year. But when I came back after working at camp, I had changed and grown so much. I was able to handle conflicts and relate to people so much more.”

After spending many years away from camp and serving in a career in law enforcement, Chris benefited from reconnecting again. “In the police department, I saw people on their worst days so much of the time,” Chris shares. “I had gotten very cynical. Then one summer I went to Lutheridge for a servant camp. Being back there recentered me. People around me noticed too. After my week at Lutheridge my mom told me, ‘The old you is back. You’ve had a rebirth!’”

The impact of that week made Chris seek out more opportunities to serve at camp. He started inviting others to come to Lutheridge each summer to help with maintenance needs. “We spent a lot of time cutting firewood and clearing trails. One day someone called our work lumberjacking, and it stuck. We’ve been calling ourselves the Lutheridge Lumberjacks ever since.”

Chris and the Lumberjacks came to Lutheridge twice in the fall to help with the large cleanup effort that was underway after Hurricane Helene, clearing roads on one trip and the Lakeside Village area on another. The group plans to come back in March to continue the recovery work.

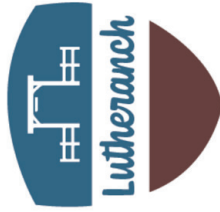
“Going back to camp now continues to recenter me,” Chris says. “Lots has changed over the years at camp, but what people get out of it, how it makes you feel, that hasn’t changed. There’s still so much love.”

We are grateful for so many friends of camp who have supported our ministry following Hurricane Helene. Your gifts, your work, and your prayers are empowering us and moving us forward into a new season of ministry. Thank you!

2024 Revenue  
**\$4,169,837**

2024 Expenses  
**\$4,135,339**

Back in November of 2023 we shared with you the financial struggles of the ministry. Since then, there has been tremendous progress. We are pleased to share that 2024 ended in the black and we paid back over \$500,000 in debt over the course of the year. We certainly still have work to do to care for facilities, pay staff competitively, and provide the level of scholarships needed, but we have made significant strides toward turning our financial picture around.



# NovusWay Ministries

PO Box 830  
Arden, NC 28704  
828-684-2361  
[www.NovusWay.org](http://www.NovusWay.org)

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