

# The Link to a Place Apart



## YES, YOU NEED YOUR BIBLE



As a freshman at Newberry College, Matt Titus attended his first Lutheran Campus Ministry event and found himself in a crowd of people singing *cheesy* songs. “I thought the whole event was ridiculous, so I started making hand motions to mock the event.” Matt’s “hand motions” got him noticed by a junior and friend, Jason Lee. “Hey, you know if you like to do hand motions to songs, you would be a good camp counselor at Lutheridge.”

Matt had no interest in Lutheridge, but he liked and respected Jason. “I thought Jason was cool, and if he was going to camp as a counselor, then maybe it wasn’t all bad.”

Fast forward to a nervous Matt and his father, who were 15 minutes up the road to camp for counselor orientation. He looked at his father and asked, “Do you think I need a Bible?”

“What? Really son? Yes, you need a Bible to be a camp counselor.” His dad turned the car around to get Matt’s Bible from home.

Matt spent most of his summer with elementary aged campers except the week he worked with the Summer Shine Campers, non-typically developing adults. “I was so nervous,” Matt said. “It was way more responsibility and care than I felt I could handle.” Looking back, Matt credits that week as the moment Lutheridge became a permanent love in his heart.

“To talk to the campers and see *THEM*, not *through* them was only possible because of that intimate community and connection created by the camp environment. I saw God at work in them, a group of people who had no worries or cares and who only brought joy to the world.”

Matt shared that while the week was life changing, it was also a stretch for him, “I did not see the gifts in myself to be a leader or counselor for these amazing campers. Instead, Pastors Tim and Mary Canniff-Kuhn, the program directors, saw the gifts in me and moved me out of my comfort zone.” While they saw the gifts in him, Matt still doubted. “But they didn’t leave me alone. They matched me with a co-counselor who had experience and who encouraged me. **They trusted me and walked alongside me. That week showed me the true power of Christian community.**”

Fast forward again. Today, Matt is the pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Newberry, SC. Now, because of the impact camp had on Matt’s life, he is doing the same for others. After seeing the gifts for camp ministry in a young Newberry College student from his own congregation, he encouraged her to apply to be a counselor. “She was hired and ready to move to camp this year, but as we know that didn’t happen because of Covid-19.

**While I know not having camp was the right decision, I do wonder about the impact a year without camp will have on our church as a whole,” reflected Matt.**

“This past summer we lost the fun of camp, yes, but we also lost a full summer of developing leaders and building confidence. We also lost a greater sense of community that can only be experienced at camp. Children and young adults, and even adults for that matter, need a place to ask the burning faith questions they are afraid to ask their pastor, and I say that as a pastor. They need a safe place to meet people from other cities and communities who are also faithful and realize they are not alone. They need to see that the faith community is larger than their local congregation.”

Matt and his wife Erin, whom he met at camp have supported camp as program volunteers and by attending programs since their years on summer staff. They send their own daughters to camp and attend family camp together each summer.

But for the first time, they are also now supporting the camp financially. By doing so, they know they are investing in the lives of young people, the transformative power of camp, and the development of the next generation of leaders who will go on to love and serve their communities, the church and the world. “We talked about it and realized we *can* give, we *want* to give, and we were being *called* to give,” Matt said. “We started a monthly gift because we wanted to be intentional about the way we support the ministry on a continuing basis for years to come. We know it isn’t much, but when it is added to so many others, it means the strength and health of camp.”

*Rev. Matt and Erin Titus live in Newberry, SC with their two elementary aged daughters. Matt is the pastor at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Newberry, SC.*

*Rev. Jason Lee, Matt’s friend from College, is the pastor at St. Philip Lutheran Church in Myrtle Beach, SC. He lives there with his wife Dana and their son and daughter.*