

The Link to a Place Apart

 **Lutheridge**

 **Lutherock**

 **Luther Springs**

 **Luther ranch**



ROOTED IN 65 YEARS OF MINISTRY

When you cross the creek and drive into Lutherock you are greeted by Maple, Birch, Oak and Pine trees, rooted in the rich soil where the Sipe Family and six American Lutheran Church “Founder” congregations first stood and envisioned what this camp community could become. Mr. V.O. Sipes’ gift of 50 acres in 1957 inspired more gifts that allowed the purchase of additional property, the construction of Founders Lodge (1966-69), Stone Lodge, the bathhouse, and the establishment of Lutherock Outdoor Ministries. In 1991, Lutherock joined Lutheridge to become Lutheridge+Lutherock Ministries and grew to 200 plus acres. From 2000-2010, the spaces that would become cabin village and our retreat housing took shape, dramatically increasing our capacity to serve guests from 45 to our current capacity of 1,500. SOIL has brought forth amazing capacity for growth!

The facility ROOTS took shape during that important decade of 2000-2010, with the creation of Rhododendron cabin, Executive Director House, 5 additional cabins, Crow’s Nest Retreat Center (expansion for 4 season ministry), McKnight Pavilion, moving of the tent village to its current OAP site, and Moretz Retreat Cabin. We currently inhabit 780 acres, although 70% (550 acres) is a conservation easement (protected land with 2 endangered ecosystems and 3 endangered species) that was established in 2015 through the Blue Ridge Conservancy and Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Our land is a rich and precious gift, the soil through which amazing growth happens.



A MESSAGE

from the Intentional Interim CEO

I recently attended a conference of Camp Executive Directors from Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) from all over the United States and Canada. It is always great to spend time with your peers who are all trying to make great

things happen for and through their camps. We have a similar set of issues that we are working on day by day, but we are all blessed to have great volunteers plus fabulous staff members as teammates in all we do. Rather than asking others to help us, one of our presenters challenged us to approach our synods, our congregations, our rostered persons, and our camp families with the statement: “We at Camp ELCA are here to be your resource. How can we help you?”

Did you know that in 2023 there are 89 outdoor ministry organizations in the LOM who operate a total of 119 camps? (Several other organizations like NovusWay operate more than one camp site.) Most of our Lutheran camps were founded in the 1940’s-1960’s, and today they are stewards of over 38,000 acres of God’s creation! In 2022, we employed 675 year-round staff and 4,000 summer staff to serve 150,000 summer campers and 275,000 campers and retreat guests in the rest of the year.

Your camps are year-round resources in so many ways:

- for families, adults, and youth to gather and explore in God’s creation;
- for youth to be strengthened in their faith through confirmation and other camp programs;
- for meetings of all sizes to bring the church together in a place apart from our daily work;
- for our congregations to reach out to new people and invite them to join our journey of faith;
- for trained camp staff who come to the congregations and neighborhoods to serve many young people who do not have a church home through Day Camps programs;
- for disciples to reach beyond their church to commune with members from other congregations.

Our journey began with Lutheridge in 1950 and since then we have grown into a wonderful four site ministry of Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs and Lutheranch. And there are many extraordinary years ahead!

We are NovusWay Ministries — How can we help you?

Dick Peterson
Intentional Interim CEO

MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST SEES IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Last summer, a new position was created at Lutheridge - Mental Health Specialist. Molly Johnson, a former counselor, Area Director, and Program Director who now works as a school counselor near camp, was on call for staff and camper mental health needs. Due to the increased mental health concerns among children, youth, and young adults, Molly's presence was invaluable in caring for the safety, health, and well-being of everyone at camp. She provided care for campers and staff as they experienced mental health issues in the midst of stressful situations and overwhelming fatigue.



One counselor said: "Having a mental health specialist on call this summer was so unbelievably valuable. Not only were we able to better care for our campers, but it also provided extra support for our staff. Working at camp is extremely rewarding, but it's not an easy job. It's difficult to find the time and energy to take care of your own physical, mental, and spiritual health, especially when working in a cabin. Having the opportunity to process and address mental health challenges with a trained professional helped me personally, because I knew that I always had that support available during times of high stress. We are better able to support our campers and their own mental health needs when we as staff have that same support. In addition to having support for every day mental health challenges, the value of having a crisis specialist can not be understated. Knowing that we could call someone specifically trained in crisis intervention when those situations arose brought me a sense of calm and confidence in addressing crisis events effectively and ensuring our campers were happy, healthy, and safe."

This new role was so valuable that other camps who have heard about it through the grapevine have started seeking their own mental health specialists. We are excited to welcome Molly back in this role for this upcoming summer and will continue to seek ways to address the ongoing mental health crisis among youth and young adults. It's just one more thing that helps set Lutheridge as "a place apart"!

There are many other ways you can share your gifts and skills with camp! We're looking for enthusiastic individuals to serve as CARE Leaders, camp nurses or volunteers on Cavalry. Visit www.NovusWay.org/volunteer or contact a member of our Development Team to find out how you can give back to camp!





THE PLACE I CALL HOME

My first encounter with Luther Springs was in elementary school during a day camp held at my church. I can't remember every detail of that day camp, but I do remember that it was fun, the counselors were awesome, I loved all the songs, and I experienced God.

It wasn't until the sixth grade that I spent a whole week away at camp, sleeping in cabins and exploring the outdoors. I went with my confirmation group and instantly fell in love with the atmosphere of camp – the laughter around the table at meals, the team-building on the challenge course, the worship around the campfire, my faith growing through devotional time, the friendships and bonds made throughout the whole week. After that summer, I went back every year all the way through Leadership Lab, where I grew in confidence and joy until I was old enough to one day become a counselor!

My first summer as a counselor was in 2015. I was elated to finally spend all my time at camp! I was excited to make new friends, experience God, and become a mentor to campers and help them grow in their faith and know that they are loved. I feel called to hospitality and community development and camp was a perfect setting to foster those gifts and equip me for ministry. Camp very quickly became a home and the community was a beautiful, supportive family. I spent four summers at Luther Springs. Going into my senior year of college, I thought I would have to give it up. I knew that the year I graduated would have to be my last summer and I simply could not come to terms with that. Camp was the place that brought me the greatest joy I've ever felt. I knew my gifts and passion lied within the worship and creation that surrounds Luther Springs and I started to discern if I should change my career path to outdoor ministry. My major in college was environmental studies and I always pictured working for a conservation agency, but God called me on a different path.

After graduating college, I decided to work at a different Lutheran camp called Sky Ranch. I wanted to discover if my love for camp was for Luther Springs or for outdoor ministry as a whole. Sky Ranch was just as beautiful, joyful, and Spirit-filled as the camp I called home. I spent the following year serving as a volunteer at school in Australia through the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) Program. That experience affirmed my call to ministry centered around hospitality and community. I wanted to know more about God and be better equipped as a church leader.





Naturally, I discerned attending seminary at the end of my YAGM year.

My YAGM experience ended in the midst of COVID when most camps were not operating, including Luther Springs. I spent my summer before seminary working at a Lutheran camp in North Dakota. Once again, I was surrounded by love, joy, and the Holy Spirit. I knew camp was my calling!

I entered seminary as a candidate for Word and Service with the hope to serve the Church in outdoor ministry as a Deacon. To me, camp is a prime experience of the inbreaking of the Kingdom. Camp is communion – a gathering of people from all places to be together and experience the love and presence of Christ among us. After two years of seminary education, I returned home to Luther Springs to be the Assistant Summer Director. It felt so good to be back and to be a part of a new team in a familiar place. I enjoyed leading the counselors and campers in activities and worship. I try to keep Christ at the center of all that we do at Luther Springs. Christ is present in the songs, meals, games, and relationships.

I finish seminary this year and all my dreams have come true. After exploring different ministries and discerning, I am overwhelmingly excited to join the NovusWay team as a full-time Assistant Program Director at Luther Springs! I cannot wait to lean into the dance with the Spirit as I continue to grow, lead, and create spaces of community for guests to experience the Kingdom. I can't wait to welcome other campers, counselors, and guests home!

Your spiritual and financial gifts make camp possible and help to change the lives of campers and counselors like mine every day!

Macy Kennedy
Former Camper, Counselor and Current Staff Member





The **ROOTS** of our **MINISTRY TREE** include: the “Founders,” our facilities, the staff who served faithfully during this era, and the children and families who experienced the impact of ministry in the early years.

Our **TRUNK** is made strong by the people who hold our past and present together: our congregational partners, our four Synods and their Bishops, our donors whose gifts have led to the improvement and expansion of our site and those who have served faithfully in the NovusWay Offices to provide

administration and development support to the many seasons and faces of year-round senior staff. These partnerships are truly the heart of the Lutherock Ministry Tree.

Our **BRANCHES** are the people and things that make up our present state of being. We have emerged from the intense COVID years where we were completely shut down in 2020, at which time we were able to transform Founders Lodge to create an exceptional multi-purpose space with breathtaking views. We have had 3 seasons of rebuilding our summer staff team to our current crew of 23, including Summer Directors, Main site, OAP counselors and SALT team members (our pipeline for future counselling staff). Our year-round staff team – Executive, Program and Activities Directors, Retreat Program Assistant and Facilities Team – is about to hit the first anniversary of serving faithfully together and we are excited to be connectors between the past and the future.

Finally, the **LEAVES** of our tree are the vision and opportunities for the next 65 years of ministry. Over the next 5 years, we hope to grow camper participation to 80% capacity or about 1,300 participants in a summer season. We’ve already seen significant growth in Outdoor School, Year-Round Program Retreats, and Hosted Ministry. We believe our partnership with attractions like Grandfather Mountain will foster those connections for exponential growth with school groups excited to experience Lutherock. Another goal is ecumenical expansion beyond Lutheran circles, as we are committed to inclusion and becoming a mission base for various groups across the country. We have big dreams for our facilities: a four-season dining hall and gathering space, OAP bathhouse, and infrastructure improvements like a creek crossing to create the ability to get charter buses to our group sites. We’re laying the groundwork for an internship program and training for outdoor adventure seasonal staff/outdoor ministry classes by partnering with local colleges like Appalachian State University and Lees McCray College, as well as some midwestern Lutheran Colleges.



To celebrate the 65 years behind us and to embrace the opportunities for the 65 years ahead, we have created a GIVING TREE with 65 opportunities to bless Lutherock. There are gift levels of every shape and size that will help our MINISTRY TREE stay strong for future generations. We invite you to think about the role Lutherock has played in your life or the lives of your family and friends and give a gift that will bear fruit for generations to come!



Scan the QR code left to view the Giving Tree and opportunities for blessing our ministry at Lutherock. Contact Kristen Williams, KWilliams@NovusWay.org or (828) 209-6305, to learn more. Come visit us soon to see firsthand the impact your life, legacy and gifts are making at Lutherock!





A SPECIAL GIFT INDEED

Lutheranch's "Women of the Range" retreat attracted Audrey Cundey. It sounded like a fun opportunity to ride horses and to visit Lutheranch again, recalls Audrey. She was a camper at Lutheridge years ago. Her congregation, Community of Grace in Grayson, GA, has supported Lutheranch from its beginning, but it had been years since Audrey was out there. Why not see the

Lutheranch of today for herself? "I thought Grandma might like to go with me," Audrey says. "Then I thought - why not make this retreat my birthday gift to her?" Granddaughter Audrey gave Grandma Ruth Cundey a very special birthday gift – the shared experience of a Women of the Range retreat at Lutheranch March 24-26. Audrey even drove the two of them across Atlanta in the rain, for her first trip driving the freeway!

For years now it's been the other way around for many. Grandparents bring grandchildren to Grands Camp, Grands Weekend or send them to Summer Camp at one of NovusWay's four sites. It's often a shared experience of faith forming and bonding in a ministry of the Church. For many children and youth whose congregations are still impacted by the Covid pandemic, it's an opportunity to grow faith out in God's Creation.

Audrey turned this model around. She brought her grandmother to share something special to both of them – a retreat to Lutheranch. What made the weekend so special for the two of them? "Sharing Bible Study, campfires, and fellowship with other women of faith" the two agree, in addition to time with the horses.

Horses and Cundeys have history outside Atlanta where both families live. When Ruth and Ken Cundey's last horse died at the age of 30, they donated the horse's beautiful saddle to Lutheranch. Ruth put special stirrups on that saddle when Audrey was young so she and other children could ride. Audrey didn't need special stirrups on that saddle she used during their retreat to Lutheranch! Ken and Ruth are not just horse lovers; they are generous donors to Lutheranch, including a naming gift – Cundey Horse Trail.

Audrey and Ruth applaud Program Director Gretchen Ahrens' equine focus that made this event so meaningful. "Gretchen has participants 'bond' with the horse they'll ride by helping with grooming, feeding, and





During the pandemic, you helped us to
LIGHT THE FIRE.

Now, join us to **FAN THE FLAME**
and keep the fire burning!

Emerging from Covid, we did not anticipate having immediately to face another battle – rising inflation. Our operations expenses are higher, summer camper numbers are rising to pre-Covid numbers, and we're doing more with fewer summer staff (but have committed to a much needed increase in salaries). All of these factors are – and will continue to be – a threat to the future and sustainability of outdoor ministries across the ELCA.

So what are we doing about it?! We're focusing our efforts on redeveloping summer and year-round programming, staff recruitment and leadership development, and improving facilities to keep our camps in top shape. We will continue to uphold our commitment to support every camper in need of scholarships due to financial constraints. **BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP!**



Support our outdoor ministry through a financial gift!
Visit www.NovusWay.org or scan the QR code (left) to give.

Share your time and talents with us! We're always looking for enthusiastic individuals to serve as summer camp counselors, CARE Leaders, camp nurses or volunteers on Cavalry. To learn more, contact Kristen Williams: KWilliams@NovusWay.org.

Your support of our outdoor ministry blesses and enriches the lives of all who experience the joy, fellowship, and nurturing that God provides in our places apart!



Support our individual camp needs! Scan the QR codes below to view their Amazon Wish Lists, order items and have them shipped straight to camp.



 **Lutheridge**



 **Lutherock**



 **Luther Springs**



 **Lutheranch**



 **Lutheranch -Equestrian**

learning the responsibilities of a farrier to provide the care needed to keep a horse healthy,” they say. “Gretchen knows the horses at Lutheranch well and lines them up for trail rides as they are most comfortable. It just makes for a perfect experience,” they say, “for programs, trail rides or equine therapy!”

Time at Lutheranch, Lutheridge, Lutherock and Luther Springs, is for many a time of healing, bonding, and faith forming in God’s Creation. Visit www.NovusWay.org to learn more about program opportunities, as well as ways you can support God’s work of changing lives in the outdoor ministries of NovusWay!

If you are interested in booking your own family, church, or business retreat reach out to our reservations office today at 828-209-6328 or email us at bookings@novusway.org.



Our Development Team

Your generosity makes a difference! To make a donation or to learn more about ways you can give to camp, please contact our Development team at give@novusway.org or visit www.novusway.org/ways-to-give.



Kristen Williams
Financial Development
Executive Director



The Rev. Dr. Jan Setzler
Senior Development
Officer



Rev. Nathan Gragg
Development Officer

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
ASHEVILLE NC
PERMIT #575

NovusWay Ministries

PO Box 830
Arden, NC 28704
ph 828-684-2361
www.NovusWay.org

Change Service Requested

In an effort to be good stewards, we ask for your help maintaining accurate records to minimize unnecessary postage.

Make corrections on the label. Mail it back to us or send an image to give@novusway.org.

- ☐ Name Change
☐ I receive more than one copy
☐ Address Change
☐ I'd like to receive this publication by email
Email: _____
☐ Please remove me from the mailing list

Your Gift Makes a Difference!



We're thrilled to get back to a normal summer camp season across the ministry! Your support has sustained us and helped us to grow into an incredible four site outdoor ministry serving God's children, young and old.

During the pandemic, you helped us to LIGHT THE FIRE. Now, join us to FAN THE FLAME and keep the fire burning! Scan the QR code right to show your support of one or more of our NovusWay sites. We hope that our camps continue to be a part of your faith journey. After all, YOU make camp possible!



**SCAN TO
GIVE TODAY!**

Give today at www.novusway.org

THANK YOU!