

## Camp Bethel Director's report to the 2016 Virlina District Conference

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ~ Romans 8:35,37-39*

We need places in our lives where we can encounter God in ways we can't in other places. We need "*thin places*" in our lives; where the veil that obscures understanding is more transparent. Jesus prayed to God in gardens, on hilltops, by the river and the seashore, because, in part, he felt closer to God there. We need places where we can physically experience the magnitude of interconnectedness described by Paul in Romans 8:38-39. We in the Virlina District have established Camp Bethel to do great things: a wilderness place: a positive place, a place next to God, not a place to be feared, but perhaps even a "*thin place*" where we can pray and work and play and worship and foster and build relationships with each other, with Creation, and with God.

It's with great joy that Camp Bethel enters our 90th year of continuing ministry in 2017! The following report is only a glimpse into all the work and support and commitment that the staff and committees and congregations pour into making Camp Bethel a "*thin place*." It's all worth it! To see the veil lifted when one child learns that nothing... "*will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*."

Our excellent 2016 **Summer Camps** included 7 weeks of excellent, authentic and Spirit-filled programs with the theme "Not Afraid, Not Alone: Courage in Community." We registered 1,159 campers in 83 program choices (1,209 campers in 72 programs in 2015), with 280 participants in our 6 Traveling Day Camps (229 in 2015) and 66 participants in our Family Fun nights (65 in 2015). We were blessed by excellent staff, helpful partners, and dedicated volunteers who served as Chaplains, counselors and general helpers. Other data:

- We hosted 5,592 individual camper days in summer 2016, (5,811 in 2015 and 5,490 in 2014).
- 208 children received Good-As-Gold funding from Virlina congregations totaling \$49,934, (222 campers totaling \$49,127 in 2015).
- 72 received "Camperships" totaling \$19,410, which exceeds funds by \$4,057, (118 in 2015 = \$29,370; 143 in 2014 = \$39,876).
- 613 campers registered on-line, (622 in 2015).
- 63 campers pre-registered in 2016 for 2017 camps (60 campers in 2015 for 2016; 49 campers in 2014 for 2015).
- 593 campers registered by the May 1 "Subsidized" discount or chose a program "on sale," (633 in 2015).
- Of the 545 who answered the question, 270 identified as Church of the Brethren (49% who answered), 275 as other denomination (51%).
- 56 attended our partner Carilion's Camp Too Sweet (48 in 2015), and 47 attended Kevin Jones Performing Arts Camps (78 in 2015).
- Camper families gave summer offering of \$2,256.80 (50% for scholarships & 50% for Back-to-School Kits).
- From May 24-August 13, Brigitte's kitchen team served a total of 22,822 individual meals during 176 meal times, not including over 1,000 out lunches and Home-in-the-Woods cookouts, (23,700 meals in 165 times in 2015). EVERY meals was on time and plentiful.
- Announcing our exciting 2017 Summer Camp theme: "Branching Out: Connect Through Christ." Registration opens January 8!

Camp Bethel is open all year. In addition to our 1,159 summer campers, in 2016 we will host over 22,750 guests in retreats, events, special programs, and Your Outdoor Classroom and KinderCrittters outdoor education. In 2016 we hosted guests on 49 of 52 possible weeks and weekends!

We depend on fundraising events to help pay the bills and keep our ministry viable. Our **Christmas Together Banquet** on December 3 raised \$4,002 and our **Sow the Seed Banquet** on March 3 raised \$8,187. Big thanks to everyone who attended our April 15-16 15th annual **Sounds of the Mountains Festival**, where our excellent committee and dozens of festival sponsors raised \$29,824 for camp. On August 24, 94 golfers and several dedicated sponsors raised \$14,490 at our 22nd annual **Camp Bethel Benefit Golf Tournament**. Our October 1 **Brethren Heritage Day Festival** raised over \$31,600. Big thanks to each congregation who held an event or

offering in honor of Camp Bethel, to all the hundreds of persons who committed so much time and effort into these events, and special thanks to each congregation who participates in our fundraising events. Camp Bethel is very blessed to have so many wonderfully supportive congregations and families!

In 2016, we accomplished several site improvements. The House of Pillars ceiling was renovated. New 6-inch bottom bunk mattresses were placed in all cottages and lodges. Hearths and chimneys were rebuilt in the Retreat Center and Heritage Lodge. All four Adventure Village platform huts now have metal roofing. The road and trail to Vesper Hill was repaired, and the Woods family built a Sunrise Chapel on the eastern slope in memory of Stephanie Woods Richfield. The Ark Pond awaits equipment timing for dredging and repairs. Mt. Hermon CoB constructed a new covered entryway and new stoop on the side doors of the Deer Field Gym.

The **Outdoor Ministries Committee** met quarterly and guided all aspects of the camp's administration, personnel, programs, property and finances. The OMC continued reviewing the Master Site Plan priorities in order to continue forward implementation in 2017 and through funding received from our District/Camp mission resourcing campaign, "Seed, Scattered and Sown: Reaching Beyond This Generation."

We are truly blessed by an excellent management team at Camp Bethel, including **Brigitte Burton** (Food Services Coordinator), **Beth Heaton** (Guest Services Coordinator), and **Mickey Nichols** (Facilities Manager). **Jenna Stacy** will serve as our full-time Program Coordinator beginning on January 1. **Buddy Crumacker** and **Dave Flora** are our part-time Maintenance Assistants, and **Melissa Browning** and **Amanda Tuck** are our part-time housekeepers. **Tabitha Rudy** served as our summer Administrative Assistant May through July.

**Thank you, Virlina District congregations**, for your extraordinary giving and volunteerism. Your participation in Camp Bethel as donors, sponsors, volunteers and guests is of great importance and help, and your generous self-allocations for Camp Bethel provide essential funding for all we do. Pray for the staff, the Virlina District Board and the Outdoor Ministries Committee, and all our volunteers and supporters as we celebrate our **90<sup>th</sup>** year of continuing ministries in 2017. **Together** we joyfully continue the work God sets before us in this, our "*thin place*."

*TOGETHER*, in Christ our hope,

Barry S. LeNoir, Camp Director  
[www.CampBethelVirginia.org](http://www.CampBethelVirginia.org)



December 3, 2016 (Sat): Virlina District Board & OMC Retreat.  
December 4-21, 2016: Schedule your Christmas Banquet!  
December 8, 2016 (Thurs): Christmas TOGETHER Banquet.  
December 30, 2016 (Fri): Summer Staff & CIT Reunion.  
Dec 31, 2016-Jan 1, 2017 (Sat-Sun): Winter Camp New Year Party & Program.  
January 9, 2017: Summer Camp Registration opens!  
February 11, 2017 (Sat), 12:00noon: Camp Supporter Lunch, RSVP.  
February 17-19, 2017: CPR & Wilderness First Aid Training.  
March 2, 2017 (Thurs), 6:30pm: Sow the Seed Banquet, RSVP.  
April 1, 7:30am Spring Workday & 1:00pm Vol Appreciation Luncheon.  
April 28-29, 2017 (Fri-Sat): 16th Sounds of the Mountains Festival.  
May 23-25, 2017 (Tues-Thurs): Summer Leadership Team Training.  
May 26-29, 2017: Memorial Day Family Weekend & Concerts, RSVP meals.  
May 27, 2017 (Sat), Family Day/Summer Camp Open House, 1:00-4:00pm.  
May 29-June 9, 2017: Summer Staff Training.  
June 11-Aug 4, 2017: Summer Camps & Family Adventures, Branching Out: Connecting through Christ  
June 13-16, 2017 (Tues-Fri): CIT Training and Practicum.  
August 23, 2017 (Wed): 23rd Annual Benefit Golf Tournament.  
September 1-4, 2017: Labor Day Family Weekend, RSVP meals.  
October 7, 2017 (Sat): 33rd Brethren Heritage Day Festival.  
November 4, 2017 (Sat), 7:30am: Fall Workday, RSVP meals.