

Camp Bethel Director's report to the 2015 Virginia District Conference

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." ~ Matthew 28:19-20

*"Peter began to speak. 'I now realize how true it is that God treats everyone the same. He accepts people from every nation who have respect for him and do what is right... The message God sent is the good news of peace through Jesus Christ...' While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The believers who had come with Peter were **astonished** that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles... Then Peter said, 'Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized... They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.'" ~ Acts 10:34-44*

Astonished, or afraid? Why are we ever surprised by God's desire to be in relationship with us? Why are we ever afraid to let God work upon us and through us for others? God is, after all, a community, a Trinity, a plurality of oneness, and we are created in that image: to be in relationship with God and with each other. Jesus himself assures us that *"I am with you always."* Surely we've learned by now through Scripture and experience that living as God's people in community requires our courage and provides us with courage. Without higher quality material to work with, God relies on us to have the courage to *"go and make disciples of all nations..."* Scripture, experience and relationship don't just teach us, they indeed do something in us.

That's what makes Camp Bethel's "Experiential Christian Education" in the outdoors such a powerful tool in making disciples. Taking a cue from Peter, we mix kids and teens and young adults (and some of us "older adults" too) from diverse backgrounds into a Christian camp community intent on being in relationship with each other. Living and working and playing and worshiping together helps each individual see themselves as God sees them so that they aren't afraid to see each other as God sees them. These resulting relationships give us courage: to do the hard work God sets before us; to do the things we think we're incapable of doing; to love God and each other; to go and make disciples of all nations. *Astonished?* No. We're not afraid, because we're not alone.

Camp Bethel's **2015 Summer Camps** were our most successful ever. A record number 1,209 campers (marking 108% growth since 2002) enjoyed 7 weeks of excellent, authentic and Spirit-filled camps in 72 program choices with the theme "Power Up! Live in the Holy Spirit!" We were blessed by an excellent Summer Staff, helpful partner organizations, and dedicated volunteers who served as Chaplains, counselors and general helpers. Other highlights:

- We had 5,829 camper days in 2015 compared to 5,490 in 2014 (increase by 339 camper days).
- 230 participants in our 3 new Traveling Day Camps held in Roanoke/Salem at Peters Creek CoB, Franklin County at Antioch CoB, and Henry County at Bassett CoB.
- 65 participants in our new Family Fun Tuesdays and Lil' Otter Family River Paddle Wednesdays.
- 222 campers received Good-As-Gold funding from Virginia congregations totaling \$49,127.
- 118 campers received "Campership" funds totaling \$29,370, which exceeds available funds by over \$8,000.
- 622 campers registered on-line, 49 campers pre-registered for 2015, and 60 campers pre-registered for 2016.
- 633 campers either registered before the May 1 "Early Bird" discount ended or chose a program "on sale."
- 395 identified as Church of the Brethren (52% who answered), 370 as other denomination (48%).
- 48 campers attended Carilion's Camp Too Sweet; 78 campers attended one of three Performing Arts Camps.
- Camper families gave summer offering of \$3,913.17 (50% for scholarships & 50% for New Cabin Fund).
- From May 26-August 15, Brigitte's kitchen team served a total of 23,700 individual meals during 165 meal times, not including over 1,000 out lunches and Home-in-the-Woods cookouts. Every meal was on time, and there was always plenty of food for everyone.
- In summer 2015, 118 campers received "Campership" funding totaling \$29,370, which exceeded our available fund by over \$8,000. Please consider donating \$290, which was the 2015 cost for a child to attend one basic week of resident camp at Camp Bethel. Mail checks with memo "Camperships" or donate at www.CampBethelVirginia.org.
- Announcing our exciting 2016 Summer Camp theme: "Not Afraid, Not Alone: Courage in Community." Registration opens January 1!

Camp Bethel is busy all year. In addition to our 1,209 summer campers, in 2015 we will host over 22,500 guests in retreats, events, special programs, and Your Outdoor Classroom and KinderCritters outdoor education.

We depend on fundraising events to help pay the bills and keep our ministry viable. Our **Christmas Together Banquet** on December 4 raised \$11,710 and our rescheduled **Sow the Seed Banquet** on March 26 raised \$8,025. Big thanks to everyone who attended our April 17-18 **Sounds of the Mountains Festival**, where our excellent committee and dozens of festival sponsors raised \$24,465 for camp. On August 19, 92 golfers and several dedicated sponsors raised \$15,240 at our 21st annual **Camp Bethel Benefit Golf Tournament**. Our October 3 **Brethren Heritage Day Festival** was cancelled due to dangerous weather, but several rescheduled events including "**Heritage Day Light**" on October 17 at Summerdean Church raised over \$30,000. 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 the Summerdean congregation. Camp Bethel is very blessed to have so many wonderfully supportive congregations and families!

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 2016 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 continue her role as resident volunteer intern through 2015, and she will serve as our 2016 interim Program Coordinator in order to help organize our 2016 Summer Camps. **Buddy Crumpacker** and **Dave Flora** are our part-time Maintenance Assistants, and **Melissa Browning** and **Amanda Tuck** are our part-time housekeepers. **Hannah Oakes** served as our part-time Administrative Assistant from March 2013 through September 2015. She served on our summer camp staff since 2011 and as one of our Summer Program Coordinators for 2014-2015. On Sunday, September 6 at our Labor Day Weekend Pot-Luck Dinner, we recognized and thanked Hannah for seven years of excellent service to Camp Bethel's ministries.

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 enter our **89th** year of continuing ministries in 2016. **Together** we joyfully continue the work God sets before us. We are not afraid, because we are not alone.

TOGETHER, in Christ our hope,

Barry S. LeNoir, Camp Director
www.CampBethelVirginia.org



December 1-2-3: Virginia Camp & Retreat Leaders' Gathering.
December 3 (Thurs): Christmas TOGETHER Banquet.
December 5 (Sat): Virlina District Board & OMC Retreat.
January 1, 2016: Summer Camp Registration opens!
January 1, 2016 (Fri): Summer Staff & CIT Reunion.
January 2-3, 2016 (Sat-Sun): Winter Camp Program.
February 13, 2016 (Sat), 12:00noon: Camp Supporter Lunch, RSVP.
March 3, 2016 (Thurs), 6:30pm: Sow the Seed Banquet, RSVP.
April 2, 7:30am Spring Workday & 1:00pm Vol Appreciation Lunch.
April 15-16, 2016 (Fri-Sat): 15th Sounds of the Mountains Festival.
May 27-30, 2016: Memorial Day Family Weekend, RSVP meals.
May 30-June 10, 2016: Summer Staff Training.
June 11, 2016 (Sat): Virlina District Celebrates 150 Years.
June 12-July 31: 2016 Summer Camps.
June 14-17, 2016 (Tue-Fri): CIT Training and Practicum.
August 24, 2016 (Wed): 22nd annual Benefit Golf Tournament.
September 2-5, 2016: Labor Day Family Weekend
October 1, 2016 (Sat): 32nd Brethren Heritage Day Festival.
November 5, 2016 (Sat), 7:30am: Fall Workday, RSVP meals.