



# SUGAR CREEK

## BIBLE CAMP

A Camping & Retreat Ministry

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Dear Partners in Ministry,

The Good News brings hope, especially in this time: Jesus Christ is our sure and steady anchor. The Holy Spirit inspires us to act in this faith, loving our neighbors in ways many people need now as much as ever. Thank you for the powerful ways in which your church has testified to this message this year by helping share this gospel with many hundreds of families at Sugar Creek Bible Camp!

We are grateful for your partnership, especially amidst the financial challenges of the pandemic. In 2020, due to COVID-19, the source of nearly half our annual income disappeared when traditional summer camp for youth needed to be cancelled. But your support this year – combined with creative new programs, new income sources, and major expense cuts – helped make the difference! (Our 2020 Annual Report comes after a Jan. 31 fiscal year-end.) God provides, through your faithfulness in giving. We are excited that Sugar Creek will “come back strong” for programs in 2021! You share the Good News with a world now in desperate need of *exactly* the experiences you provide through Bible camp.

The pandemic has ongoing impacts, but it never stopped us from doing everything possible to offer safe new ministry retreats. This year, *over 100 families* attended one of ten sessions of our new Family Camp programs. Thankfully, by practicing safe distancing, adding extra cleaning, consistent use of face masks indoors, open air dining, and separate lodging by household, it helped to keep everyone healthy and safe while still having tons of fun with meaningful, faith-building adventures! (If you missed it this summer, you have a couple more chances for a Sugar Creek “Family Getaway Camp” this spring.)

Traveling Day Camp teams were also cancelled due to the pandemic. So our program director, Kjell Bakken, creatively designed a *Day Camp 2-GO* program with the help of a small core team of summer staff. We offered churches this four-day online “VBS-style” program with active Bible studies, songs, and games. Kids connected with each other for camp activities through their home churches.

Despite fewer guests, it was an extremely busy year for our staff and volunteers. We focused even more on improving the facilities, creatively controlling expenses, building relationships, and expanding our communications. All this helped us offer the best ministries we could now today – and it also let us stay strong for the long haul, so we could remain viable as a unique and powerful resource for youth, churches, and families in years ahead. We also had our hands very full, outside the state’s spring closures, hosting private small-group and family events *nearly every weekend of the year!*

This year your camp property was enhanced with numerous improvements. We completed a new welcoming entrance to the Retreat Center, heavy repairs to the horse barn bridge, deck repairs and staining, light remodeling, an expansion of the maintenance pole shed funded by a local church, tree trimming, trail work, replacement of an extremely long wood horse fence, scores of adaptations for COVID safety, and dozens of other physical projects! Most of this was thanks to our *incredible* hard-working volunteers. In addition to other generous gifts, much project funding also came from a 2019 major gift from the now-dissolved St. Paul Lutheran Church of La Crosse. Important projects of all sizes (and skill levels!) are available. Please ask how you might be part of enabling other crucial projects in 2021.

“Where all generations encounter Christ...”

Vaccines are coming soon – but the pandemic is sadly not over yet. We continue to follow an extensive 100+ page guide on pandemic safety standards for camps. These recommendations were published by medical doctors and health experts in the CDC in collaboration with the American Camping Association. This covers everything: pre-camp health screenings, hand sanitizer quantities and ordering, new food service rules, and even how to clean horse saddles in a pandemic! While of course no place (stores, schools, churches, even hospitals etc.) can ever guarantee zero risk for any activity, you can be confident that your camp staff and board are committed to the highest level of standards. As a fully accredited camp, rest assured that we look first and foremost to medical experts regarding decisions about health and safety. Therefore, practices to prevent transmission will continue – even as vaccines hopefully reduce the risk – for the entire summer camp season.

We find new blessings in old traditions at Sugar Creek... not just for doing effective modern ministry, but for pandemic safety! For over 50 years our camp has focused on small-group ministry. Campers here enjoy 660 acres of big outdoor areas, open air shelters for meals, well trained summer staff, and world-class programming. Any adjustments needed for pandemic-safe activities, as in 2020's programs, will happen in ways that preserve the key fundamentals of great Bible camp ministry.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we are also excited to step forward to meet the unique needs of your youth, families, and adult groups in your church. When it is safe to do so, every *committee, council, class, and club* in your church this year is welcome to “come and see” why so many adult church groups return for an annual retreat. There are few if any better ways to jump-start your year in mission together.

Sugar Creek Bible Camp is a big team effort. This camp, and indeed churches and families across the region, are certainly stronger today because of your ownership and support for Sugar Creek. One goal of our programs is to help connect campers more deeply with the life and ministry of their home churches. We do this best when we do it together. Campers, and their parents, often report returning home from camp with a stronger sense of “ownership” in their home church, because of what camp offers: affirming, relevant, immersive adventures in Christian community. All our programs are led and designed with this long-range ministry partnership in mind. After this year's global pandemic stress and disconnection, we firmly believe the *modern Bible camp experience can help restore the spirits of our children and youth* in lasting ways!

Thank you for all you do to share the Good News with people in your community, and with youth and families across the Midwest, through camp! Your work engages in evangelism, equips the saints for service, and shares the light of Christ, bringing healing to the world.

May God bless your congregation with good health, clear vocations, new “miracle stories,” and even stronger connections with Christ and one another in the year ahead. Please let us know how we can help.

Your friend in Christ,



Jesse Klosterboer  
Executive Director

