

2021 Program Committee Report

With the strength provided by many prayers, diligent work by our staff, and tremendous financial support from individuals and congregations, summer camp at Sugar Creek was able to make its return! Despite the many challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic poses in offering overnight youth programming, we are pleased to share that by following standards set by the ACA and CDC we had **0 COVID-19 cases** in our summer programs in 2021.

Our new programs this past summer were a great success and we are excited to offer them all again this upcoming summer. **Pioneers**, for kids entering 5th grade, enjoyed staying in our Frontier Town and tending for the animals in the new **Frontier Farm**. Special thanks to Char and Bob Tumi, and the Allie and Craig Pierce family for the donation of time, equipment, and animals to make this new program area possible at Sugar Creek. **Elevated** and **Ranger** campers got the chance to explore their faith deeply immersed in the beautiful valleys and bluffs at Sugar Creek. **Night Camp** was so popular that we have expanded it to offer two different themes this upcoming summer: *Lock-in* and *Pack-out*. Overall, our summer camp programs served **621** overnight campers, **129** 1-day explorer campers, **185** family campers, **25** youth ministry staff, and **30** professional volunteer leaders (pastors, youth leaders, nurses and doctors). This, along with our year-round retreats, amounts to **38,700** “contact hours” of intentional Christian Education.

Using the momentum from a successful return to summer camp in 2021, we are excited to expand our program offerings and build capacity to reach even more youth and families this year. This includes our new summer program **Art Camp**, which will be offered once to campers grades 6-8 and once to grades 9-12. Our goal in this program will be to encourage campers to explore their creative gifts and empower them in their self-expression. They will learn from local instructors in *painting, woodcrafts, photography, guitar, dance, and creative writing*. Also, in response to the cancelling of the ELCA National Youth Gathering (NYG), we are expanding our High School Youth Group programs. We hope to partner with churches and their leaders in offering a safe and outdoor space for them to gather and experience and grow in *servanthood, leadership, and faith*. The **Boundless Wisconsin Youth Leadership Development Event**, or **W.Y.L.D.E.** will be taking place at Sugar Creek the week of the originally scheduled NYG and will allow campers and youth leaders to practice *hands-on service, leadership training, and powerful Christian community*.

Our theme for the upcoming program year is **Boundless** and is based on Eph 3: 18-19. Campers will learn how God’s love is “beyond measure” and reflect on how that empowers them to be sent forth to love their neighbor.

Looking back upon 2021, we are grateful for all the ways God has been present with us through another difficult year during the pandemic. We bring forth thanks for all the lessons learned and pray that God continues to give us strength to spread the message of love and hope found through Jesus Christ. Praise be to God!

The Program Committee: Kjell Bakken (Program Director), Jen Bjorklund, Diane Colburn, Pr. Steve Meyer, Pr. Nile Sandeen, Carla Stanton