

OUTDOOR MINISTRY REPORT

June 2020-June 2021

Submitted by Anne Rankin, Outdoor Ministry Liaison

There have, without a doubt, been a lot of tough decisions, changes made, and transitions set in place since summer 2020. The 2020 summer camp season was cancelled due to the pandemic; the decision was made last summer by the Board to sell Hartman Center; the Day and Service of Celebration, Farewell & Future at Hartman Center was held in September; the partnership with the Lutheran Camping Corporation of the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA was established. In addition, Zoe D'heedene, who had been doing outdoor ministry programming for the Conference, resigned from her position. No question about it -- big shifts have happened, new opportunities have been presented, and different possibilities continue to be explored for what outdoor ministry means and how it develops within Penn Central Conference.

The first year in partnership with the Lutheran Camping Corporation has been exceptionally strong and positive. Members of Penn Central have been involved in all of the events held at Kirchenwald, Nawakwa, and The Wittel Farm since January, including: the Winter Youth Retreat; Winter Fun Days; a Lenten Day Apart; Summer Camp Open Houses; Work Days; the Earth Day Celebration; the Growing Project Planting Days; and the Summer Camp Kick-Off Celebration. In addition, it is so wonderful that there are youth and families registered for camps throughout the entire summer. Folks from our Conference are working as summer staff and volunteering at the camps as counselors, nurses, maintenance/grounds work, staff training, with the Growing Project, with the reaccreditation of the camps, as well as in other capacities.

In addition, a Hartman Center Spirit Week will be held this summer at Camp Mount Luther in the northern part of Penn Central. Sponsored by the Central Association and run by volunteers from all of the Associations, this week is intended specifically for our Conference and friends of Hartman Center as a way to keep Hartman Center traditions alive while also creating new ones in a new space.

The wide range of outdoor ministry opportunities at the Lutheran Camping Corporation sites and Camp Mount Luther, the very generous financial incentive from Penn Central Conference, and the open-mindedness and support of clergy, lay leaders, and members of Penn Central have made it encouraging and possible to have such a tremendously successful first season with our Lutheran siblings in Christ. Thank you, all! It is with terrific hope and promise that this relationship will only continue to grow and become even more rooted as a "church away from church" for us through our participation and involvement in the seasons to come.