

BOARD OF CAMPS AND RETREATS

Greetings Campers!

It is Maundy Thursday as I write this greeting to you. This morning Rev. Shannon Stringer led a devotion for the Leadership Development Team (where the camp ministry resides in the Conference structure). She reminded us that “Maundy” refers to a “mandate or command.” What a fitting day to draft a report for you. The Camp Ministry has a clear purpose directly linked to that mandate laid down on the original Maundy Thursday. This report will remind you of that mandate, celebrate progress made in 2022, highlight some of the work we will move forward in 2023 and then wrap the report with suggestions for fulfilling the “Mandate” together.

Impact 2818

The resurrected Jesus clarified the Maundy Thursday mandate as the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. Impact 2818 was named in response to this command, a constant reminder that the Camp and Retreat Ministry of the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church exists to fulfill the Great Commission. More specifically, the Camp Ministry seeks to:

1. Give students a time and place to make commitments and explore those commitments through continued discipleship.
2. Train and deploy “counselors” to guide students in that progress.
3. Offer places that local churches can use to further their discipleship efforts through retreats, events, training, and service opportunities.

Summer program

The Impact 2818 summer camp program is the primary method used to accomplish the mission. In 2022, 1,807 students came to a summer program specifically designed to prompt questions of faith, express a need to make a conscious decision about personal faith and provide the community needed to continue a faith journey. They stayed for a combined 7,630 days and nights of programming. Of those students, 235 made a first-time commitment to follow Christ while 362 recommitted to that goal. Attendance continues to rebound from Covid with 212 churches returning students from 2021 and 63 churches returning for the first-time since the pandemic. Even more exciting: 106 new churches sent students to Impact 2818 programming in 2022! These churches have not had students in a program since before 2018 - if ever.

Counselor Training and Deployment

“Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” (See Acts 8:26-40)

Without a counselor and the entire team of counselors and directors, students would be as lost as the Ethiopian in this Acts story. Our summer program requires about 800 saints willing to spend every hour of a week with students “explaining” by words and actions. In 2022, 645 served. What about the gap? Many of those who served, served again! Some came for a week and served two. Some served all summer. Praise God! Just as the spirit prompted Phillip to “Go to that chariot and stay near it,” so too those who served stayed near and explained. What did those serving receive? More than a camp shirt! They, in turn, practiced discipleship, sharpened leadership skills, built community, and trained in a wide variety of personal and practical skills. Some of them joined the 251 students they ministered to in claiming “I want to make ministry my profession!”

What do we do the rest of the year?

Remember the above data only includes students that came to one of our advertised summer programs. What the data excludes are the 224 camps, custom camps, retreats, and events. Despite a slow pandemic-teased start, we hosted events that served 6,977 individuals on 19,568

1 days of programming! Ever been on a “Walk to Emmaus”? A Youth group retreat? Been invited to a
2 private camp experience just for those like you? Or a personal spiritual retreat to finish that sermon
3 series? This isn’t just fluff we do as we wait for July. The statistics are harder to tease out, but the
4 Impact is just as profound. Disciples are grown every week of the year.

5 6 **Royal Family Kids Camp**

7 Speaking of Impact at Camp that few have heard stories of: Royal Family Kids Camp! For several
8 years we have tested programming for students that are in foster care or otherwise in “the
9 system”. In short, every child that would be considered “orphaned” or “the least among us.” Our
10 Royal Family partnerships are our strongest solution. In 2022, we offered three programs in
11 various parts of the state with three different execution models. I could write pages about
12 effectiveness, best practices, necessary community involvement... This happened: Children
13 received love in the name of Jesus Christ. Some of them have seen love in few other places.
14 Some of them had their very first birthday party. Some had the longest stretch of adult attention
15 they have ever received. We have learned a lot about how to do this. We must do more. Look
16 around your community - really look. Pray for full vision. You have children just like these - the least
17 among us - right outside your door. Let’s reach them together. Ask any camp person how you and
18 your church can be involved.

19 20 **Serving Together**

21 Working with disadvantaged children not your calling? Can’t spend a week in a cabin with anyone -
22 forget about middle schoolers? We are at the point in the outline where I describe some of the
23 ways we can be in ministry together. Thankfully, I hear the questions regularly: How can we help
24 the Camp Ministry? How can we be better partners? How do we increase student involvement at
25 church? How do we make a difference in the lives of children? Luckily, the answer is the same for
26 all: Send kids to camp! Kids that have no church background will hear the Good News. Those who
27 have heard the stories will make decisions that will guide them throughout life. Those that have
28 already made decisions to follow Christ will go out and change the World. If you are serious about
29 making disciples for Jesus for the transformation of the World, you must give attention to students.
30 Send every kid you know, every kid in your community.

31
32 What? You're already doing this? What else can you do? Here are other ideas:

- 33 • Come on a retreat. Come with a youth group, small group, Sunday school class or
34 leadership team. Get to know people in your church again. Make up for lost time. Be our
35 guest! <https://impact2818.org/retreats/>
- 36 • Come be a counselor to students at camp. We need people prepared to invest in the lives
37 of students. <https://impact2818.org/support-camping/serve/>
- 38 • Become a regular volunteer. Mow grass, send thank you notes, paint, answer the phone.
39 We always have things that need to be done. [https://impact2818.org/support-](https://impact2818.org/support-camping/serve/)
40 [camping/serve/](https://impact2818.org/support-camping/serve/)
- 41 • Give. <https://impact2818.org/support-camping/donate/>

42 43 **Take Time to Celebrate**

44 Many of you have stories of camp experiences that changed your life. Others have experienced
45 our camps as training events or retreats. Whatever your story, please join the celebration. We are
46 celebrating 100 years of ministry at Camp Rivervale and Epworth Forest Conference Center! Put
47 the dates on your calendar. Check the web page or stop by our Annual Conference display for
48 more information.

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50 • Camp Rivervale Celebration: Saturday, September 16, 2023
- 51 • Epworth Forest Conference Center Celebration: Saturday, September 30, 2023

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We all have a mandate: Go. Baptize. Teach.

How might we partner with you in ministry? Summer programs? Training for counselors (and life)?
Retreats? Royal Family Kids Camp? We want to work alongside you and your church.

Nick Yarde

Associate Director of Camping