

Camp Deerpark

FALL 2020

A MINISTRY OF THE NEW YORK CITY MENNONITE CHURCHES

CAMP DEERPARK OWNER CHURCHES

Believers Mennonite Garifuna Ministries
Pastor Andrew Nuñez

Evangelical Garifuna Church
Pastor Celso Jaime

Evangelical Garifuna Church of Brooklyn
Pastor Martin Alvarez

Evangelical Garifuna Church of Manhattan
Pastor Margarito Martinez

Friendship Community Church
Pastor Kenneth L. Thompson

Grace and Peace Mennonite Church
Pastor Anita Castle

Iglesia Evangelical Menonita Eben-Ezer
Pastors Julio and Ana Damaso

Immanuel Community Church
Pastor Mark Perri

Infinity Mennonite Church
Pastor Albert Taylor

King of Glory Tabernacle
Pastor Hyacinth Stevens

Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship
Pastor Jason Storbakken

Mennonite Bible Fellowship, CT
Pastor Cedric Smith

Mennonite Evangelistic Tabernacle
Pastor Nestalis DeLeon

North Bronx Mennonite Church
Pastor Ruth Wenger

United Revival Mennonite Church
Bishop Nicolas Angustia

Valley of Jesus Mennonite Church
Pastors Bernardo & Linda Rodriguez

2020 TIMELINE

March 7 – Deborah and Ken traveled to Manhattan for a birthday party for Annie Schreffler. Life was completely normal.

March 22 – Governor Cuomo issued a stay-at-home order and Camp Deerpark closed.

March 23 – A dear friend from New York City called to say, “When this is all over we will need Camp Deerpark more than ever. I am putting a gift in the mail today.”

March 25 – Three resident staff experienced COVID symptoms.

April 3 – Dear friend and mentor, Pastor Michael Banks passed away.

April 15 – Much time was spent developing contingency plans and austerity budgets. Uncertainty is the best word, but is hardly adequate.

May 4 – Camp Deerpark received \$71,300 in payroll protection funds.

May 30 – The Camp Deerpark board met and made the final decision to cancel summer children’s camp. As it turned out the NYS health department never issued summer camp permits.

May 30 – At the same board meeting the board affirmed the plan to move forward with re-opening camp for families.

June 5 – Camp hosted several families for the weekend, but the kitchen was not yet ready to serve food.

June 25 – With permission from the health department and hard work by Sean and Cameron the swimming pool opened.

July 1 – Two full-time staff were placed on partial unemployment. Two more followed on September 1 and two more on November 15. Currently all six full time staff are working three days per week.

July 3 – The five member summer crew under the direction of Kevin Smith began a six week term of hospitality service.

Continued on page 2

The newsletter is published four times a year and is distributed without charge to members and friends.

Editor: Ken Bontrager



July 27 – The Eberly family began two weeks of service here at camp through the SOOP program. They spent their time developing a guided meditation walk on the green trail, a self-guided brochure for the Challenge trail, developed the Children's Forest, and cut stacks of campfire wood. (photo below)



August 7 – A family was able to spend the weekend at camp when another family covered the cost of transportation (see attached story).

August 28 – With restrictions lifted on indoor chapel use, camp hosted our first small church group.

September – Homecoming and the rescheduled PA banquet were both cancelled.

September 18 – Meals began to be served inside with the dining room at 50% capacity.

October 20 and 22 – Camp hosted a Zoom and Facebook live gathering where we debuted a short film about life at Camp Deerpark during a pandemic.

October 24 – Mercersburg Mennonite youth cut, split, and stacked a record 29 loads of firewood. It almost feels like life is back to normal.



At the October 31st meeting the board celebrated Krista LaRuffa's nine years of board service. Krista is pictured with her mother Nancy. Krista is the first board member to join the board after term limits were set in place.

November 18 – The Camp Deerpark family gave more than \$3500 in 24 hours to help the El Shaddai church bring unemployed members on their retreat.

At the lowest point in early April it seemed as though Camp Deerpark may be forced to close for the entire year. Other camps did close. The above timeline is offered for the purpose of sharing God's goodness to us throughout this past year.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S HEART BY KEN BONTRAGER

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 is most commonly, and appropriately, known as a personal salvation scripture. It was one of the first passages that I memorized as a child. In the past few weeks I have also been reflecting on the parallels between my personal salvation and life here at Camp Deerpark during the 2020 pandemic. It is a gift of God. Yes, there has been much hard work on the part of our staff, but none of us are in a position to boast. It is December, we are still financially in the black, construction on the Promise Center continues, we are hosting families and small retreat groups, our staff are still with us; this is not of our own doing.

In this issue of the newsletter we are focusing on God's goodness to us this year. I think we have a long road of struggle ahead of us before we are back to 100% summer children's camp and full church retreats. However, we continue to have more to be grateful for than we have to complain about.

For the past eleven years we have created a Camp Deerpark calendar. We have heard many stories about how much you have appreciated the calendars. One long-time friend of camp told me, "When I have had a hard day I look at the Camp Deerpark calendar and am encouraged." I am very sorry to inform you that there will not be a 2021 calendar. With finances tight and all of our full time staff on partial unemployment, we decided the cost of a calendar was not good stewardship this year. Keep the spot on your wall open, the calendar will be back next year.

In lieu of a calendar, Katrina did a wonderful job of creating a reminder to keep our staff in your prayers. The staff, along with their families, have absorbed the brunt of the pandemic this year including the medical risk of contracting COVID, financial sacrifice, and the stress of uncertainty.

Please pray for our staff as we come to your mind. Also join us in thanks, knowing *this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God.*

CAMP DEERPARK REFLECTIONS

JESSE YODER

Jesse Yoder volunteered at Camp Deerpark from March 23 to May 1. Below are his reflections on the pandemic and his time here at Camp Deerpark.

I had just been temporarily laid off from work during the pandemic and was unsure what I was going to do with myself. Quite honestly, I didn't really have any other great options. At the time, I was living by myself in a small apartment in Lancaster City. I was staring at an open ended amount of time alone with little to do. The day after being laid off, I was hiking with some friends and Camp Deerpark came up in our conversation. Camp holds a special place in my heart from the number of weekends that I spent here cutting wood as a youth and young adult.

During my time at camp I learned the importance of community. When you are working alone (as I generally did for the first two or three weeks), you really understand the importance of other people. That hunger and craving for human interaction made working with others later during my time there more meaningful.

On previous visits to camp, I always sensed that the staff have a strong community and it was a joy to experience that. I greatly enjoyed working alongside Ben and Leonard, living with Leon-

ard, and getting to know the families at camp. I have found that memories and relationships are two of the most precious things in life, and I certainly made a number of them during my time at camp.

I also learned the power of silence and reflection. When I worked alone, I had a lot of time to just think. I found that in the midst of pandemic uncertainty, having 10 hours every day to just think while I worked was both difficult, but also good. It forced me to process everything that was going on in life and come to terms with it. In some ways, this set me up for success later on in the pandemic as I recognized the importance of processing what was happening and then accepting reality. It is important to take time in the midst of busyness for prayer and reflection.

During the past eight months flexibility and adaptability have been the two principles I have had to practice the most. In September, I left PA and am currently studying full time at Canadian Mennonite University and interning at a local church.

My time at Camp Deerpark was incredibly valuable. It gave me something meaningful and purposeful to do when the world around me was lacking direction and certainty. I will definitely remember that experience for the rest of my life and I was grateful to be able to contribute in this way during this season of life.

ASHLEY MARIN

My favorite thing about camp is the environment and the people. Feeling like I am in tune with God. Just having silent time to commune with God and getting closer to Him during that time. Camp just wraps me in its arms and I feel like I am at home away from home.

Camp Deerpark is important to me because my first encounter with camp was at age 12 and I fell in love with Camp. Being in a place that wasn't the same, but also brought me closer to God. Yes, it was in the woods and yes, there were a whole bunch of bugs. Besides that I got to learn about God, I got to sing praises to God. It was all new to me and I loved it.



Ashley, far left, has served on summer staff in a variety of capacities including head female counselor in 2016. This past summer she brought her extended family to camp for a COVID relief weekend.

SANDRA MONROY

Let me tell you my favorite thing about Camp Deerpark. I love nature, for this reason it is very easy for me to connect with everything at Camp Deerpark.

Camp is a gorgeous place with scenic areas to walk, to ride bicycles, to take pictures, to have a fun time, to enjoy eating delicious food, and meet with very nice people. I like to sit in my favorite spot, which is at the fire circle in front of the Blessing cabin, and see and listen to nature.

Camp Deerpark is important to me because I have had many amazing experiences with God. I have listened to the most fascinating stories about life, families, and culture. Stories told from others' point of view that have enriched my soul. In this time of pandemic, Camp Deerpark has been for me an oasis in the desert where I take a break from the stress of the city.



Sandra and her husband Hugo relaxing on the porch of Blessing cabin.

A STORY OF GOD'S GOODNESS BY STEPHANIE ADAMS

I was compelled to help another camp family because there have been so many times when camp has been there for my family. We have been part of the camp community for three generations and the serenity, time of worship, and growth that takes place on the grounds is something that I believe many families and individuals can benefit from.

Camp is a truly unique experience. It allows people to unplug and connect deeply with not only each other but with God. During such challenging times I think it is essential that we take every opportunity to lean in to the healing presence of God. Camp is an opportunity for individuals to find peace in the middle of the storm. So for me, aiding someone in achieving this unique experience was a no brainer.

I have had so many wonderful experiences at camp. Camp was the place that my husband Hughey and I announced our pregnancy with our daughter Jasmine. Camp was also the place where I sent both my girls and countless other relatives to experience God over the summer. It was always powerful to hear my girls reciting scriptures and singing worship songs for weeks after their time at camp.

It is truly more of a blessing to give than to receive. In times

such as these it is easy to succumb to stress and anxiety around money. I mean, we are sitting back and watching as millions go without. I am so grateful to God that I had the means to be a blessing to someone else. Just as I was able to bless someone else, God has been blessing me and my family continually. During these times we have lacked nothing. We have had food to eat and share with others. We have had clothes and shelter. We have not lacked and I believe that it is truly because God has been taking care of His people. My motto is that we are "prospering in the pandemic" and I pray we all latch on to that and speak those words in the moments that it doesn't seem to be so.

During this time, my business was scheduled to close but God made it so I could continue to provide childcare to essential workers. My oldest daughter Jasmine was promoted on her job, my daughter Jada began college, and my son-in-law maintained employment in the midst of his job laying off 90% of their staff. God has been faithful to my family! I can feel us overcoming every obstacle to come as I share this with you all! The word of God says in Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony!" I challenge us all to continue to look upon and speak on the goodness of the Lord!

2021 SUMMER CAMP SCHEDULE

SESSIONS

SESSIONS	DATES
Children's Camp Session 1	June 27-July 2
Children's Camp Session 2 & Teen Discipleship #1	July 4-9
Children's Camp Session 3 & Teen Discipleship #2	July 11-16
Children's Camp Session 4 & Teen Discipleship #3	July 18-23
Children's Camp Session 5	July 25-30
Teen Camp/ L.E.A.D	August 1-6

2021 FAMILY CAMP DATES

May 28-31 (Memorial Day)

August 9-12

August 16-19

August 23-26

August 30-September 2

September 3-6 (Labor Day)

Register at www.campdeerpark.org

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

PA BANQUET
FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2021
SHADY MAPLE RESTAURANT
EAST EARL, PA

HOMECOMING
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2021
CAMP DEERPARK

DO YOU USE AN EVERENCE CREDIT CARD?

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For more information email:
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Camp Deerpark is owned by the Mennonite Churches of New York City.