

Lakeshore Camp & Retreat Center
The Rev. Gary D. Lawson Sr., Executive Director

It's a celebration year! This year, on the shores of the Tennessee River, in the little community of Eva, we are celebrating our seventy-fifth year of United Methodist camp and retreat ministry. We know first-hand the multitude of young persons and adults who have grown in faith and discipleship over the past year. Just imagine the collective experiences of everyone who has experienced this ministry over the last 75 years. This is holy ground, and we can't even imagine all the good works that God has prepared for us over the next 75 years.

We are grateful to the legacy Memphis Conference and the current TWK Conference for making this journey possible. Whether you attended a camp or retreat in any year, sent your kids, donated, became a prayer partner, hosted a DayShore, kept us in your prayers, or are just taking the time to read this report, you have been a vital part of this holy ministry. We could not have done it without you, and we are looking forward to continuing to serve local churches and communities in our geographical area.

It has been a busy year compared to the high stress, low numbers of the pandemic years. We've been able to do the things that we feel called to do; yet that list does not even scratch the surface of the number of moments, epiphanies, callings, and discoveries that have been our blessing to witness. Hundreds of campers, retreat goers, volunteers, and guests spent time here last year, and I believe it was a fruitful way to experience life, love, and the God of grace. Children and youth learned about God, themselves, and how to build community with each other.

We take faith formation seriously at Lakeshore. Two daily theme times and nightly worship offer opportunities to learn about God and respond to the blessings of God's grace in Jesus Christ through song and prayer. Camp is more than just swimming pools and silly songs; it is creating a foundation of faith with age-appropriate messaging. All our moments are God moments, whether at the craft hut or the pool, canteen, or cabin time. Last summer, two campers were baptized, and we celebrated the reaffirmation of faith with several more.

Our Camp Hope Series of decentralized camp programs were pioneering in their creation to reach out to young persons often classified as "at-risk" because of life circumstances over which they have had little control. Camp Hope was designed to reach out to campers who have dealt with substance abuse issues in their homes; Camp Grace is for teenage girls who have experienced sexual abuse; and Camp Peace focused on teens dealing with anger management issues of their own. The Camp Hope program is in its twenty-seventh season of life-changing ministry. These camps are small (10-14 participants) in order for us to give the individual attention each camper needs. All fees are paid through camperships. If you have at-risk youth who would benefit from exposure to this wonderful ministry, please register them on our website www.lakeshorecamp.org or contact us at office@lakeshorecamp.org for more information.

We have long believed that camp and retreat ministry is a natural environment for the development of principled Christian leaders. You might say that camp is a leadership lab where young people can get hands-on experiences working with others, managing conflict, and leading in worship and activities. Pre-pandemic we offered 39,000 volunteer hours across a spectrum of opportunities mostly dominated by counseling and leading with young persons. Over our 75 years, we have celebrated many who heard their call to ministry or other serving professions through their camping, counseling, and staff experiences.

We would love to see you, your group, or your local church at Lakeshore anytime in the coming year for a visit or a tour of the facility. In addition, our permanent staff is ready, willing, and prepared to come to your place to share this ministry. Give us a call. We are also proud to be in covenant partnership with Cedar Crest and Beersheba Springs as we go forward into these new and unusual days. Thanks to all of you for your prayers and support.