“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” *1 Corinthians 3:6-7 CSB*

It has been a few months since I have written a newsletter update, and I’m not sure I could fit everything that has happened at Lake Beauty since then into one! Summer has come and gone, and before moving too quickly into what is next, I want to take some time to celebrate what God did this summer.

Over the course of the summer, we welcomed more than 900 campers to Lake Beauty. Of those campers, 85 indicated that they gave their lives to Christ for the first time. Praise God! Another 195 campers indicated a desire to be baptized as a next step in their faith. Those numbers are exciting to share, but each one represents a camper who heard the Gospel, spent time in Scripture, asked questions, was prayed for, and was given the opportunity to respond to what God was doing in their life. We are incredibly grateful for the churches, families, volunteers, speakers, and staff who make it possible for us to walk alongside these campers.

We also had the joy of welcoming families to Lake Beauty for our Family Camps this summer. Many of our Family Campers have been coming to Lake Beauty since they were children themselves, and it is a gift to see them now sharing this place with their own families. Throughout these weekends, families spend time together enjoying fellowship, but also praying over camp and reflecting on the ways God has used this ministry in their lives. I have heard Lake Beauty described by many as a “thin place”—a place where the distance between heaven and earth feels especially small. While we know that God is not confined to a particular place, it is meaningful to hear how He has met people here, sometimes across generations. It is a gift to see families who have been shaped by this ministry return year after year, not only to make new memories together, but also to pray for the next generation of campers who will encounter Jesus here.

I am personally so thankful for each person who played a part in making this summer possible. To those who spent hours washing dishes, volunteered to lead a cabin, prepared and served meals, assisted in taking care of the grounds, prayed faithfully for our staff, helped a camper get to camp, or stepped into countless other needs—thank you. Not everyone had the opportunity to sit with a camper as they asked questions about Jesus, encourage a family in their faith, or witness someone make a decision to follow Him, but each act of service helped make those moments possible. These kinds of jobs do the important work of “clearing the way to the cross.” I am grateful for the many people God has brought alongside Lake Beauty to make this ministry possible.

And while we celebrate what God is doing in the lives of our campers, I am just as grateful for the ways He is at work in the lives of those who serve them. We had 37 young adults serving on summer staff this year, and one of the great joys of the summer was watching five of them choose to be baptized! Our staff spend their summer pouring into campers, but summer after summer I am reminded that God is also at work in them as they learn to lead, serve, persevere, share their faith, and follow Jesus more faithfully themselves.

I also want to offer a special thank you to everyone who participated in our Adopt a Staff program this summer. Whether you sent a handwritten note, put together a care package, or simply committed to praying for your staff member by name, I am so grateful for the ways you cared for our team. Those small gestures of encouragement

can mean so much in the middle of a long, sometimes tiring summer of ministry. Thank you for helping our staff feel seen, supported, and prayed for as they poured into the lives of campers. Following a successful pilot year, we are excited to continue building on this program and creating opportunities for more people to intentionally invest in the young adults who serve at Lake Beauty.

As we look ahead to next summer, one of the things I am especially excited about is how we can continue investing in the next generation of young leaders. Our Leaders in Training (LIT) program has been an important part of that work for years, and this summer was another reminder of just how meaningful that investment can be. Twenty campers participated in LIT this summer, and we continue to see the impact of the program long after campers complete it. Over the years, about half of LIT participants have eventually returned to serve on our summer staff. This year, 31 of the 37 people we hired for summer staff had previously participated in LIT!

For the last several years, I have heard the same question from LIT campers: "Can I do LIT again?" We love hearing that question because it tells us these students want to keep growing. But rather than simply repeating the same experience, we want to give them an opportunity to take the next step in their faith and leadership. With that in mind, we are excited to expand LIT next summer!

Our existing program will become LIT 1, a two-week experience that gives students a foundation in Christian leadership, spiritual disciplines, biblical understanding, service, and ministry. We will offer two LIT 1 sessions next summer, giving more students the opportunity to participate. We are also introducing LIT 2, a new experience for students who have completed LIT 1 and want to continue developing as ministry leaders—whether that eventually means serving at Lake Beauty, in their churches, or wherever God places them.

I am excited about this expansion not simply because it means a larger program, but because it gives us another opportunity to walk alongside young people as they grow. We have already seen the fruit of investing in these campers over time: a camper completes LIT, grows into a young leader, and may one day return to serve the next generation of campers. Through all of it, our hope is that they are becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus.

As the leaves begin to change and we say goodbye to summer, we are looking forward to all that God has in store for this next season of ministry at Lake Beauty. In the coming months, we will welcome students for our Fall Youth Retreat, gather quilters for three fall quilting sessions, enjoy fellowship around the table at our 11th Annual Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner, and create opportunities for young adults to connect and grow in their faith. Each of these gatherings offers a different opportunity to welcome people to camp, build relationships, and continue pointing people toward Jesus. We are grateful that the ministry of Lake Beauty extends far beyond the summer months, and we look forward to seeing how God continues to work through the seasons ahead. Thank you for your continued prayers, encouragement, and partnership in this ministry. We hope to see you at camp soon!

Cheerfully in Christ,
Jodi Bertrand