

**“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8)**

Thanks be to God... and to all of you who helped in so many ways that made our Youth Spaghetti fund-raiser such a success this year! I can't write this musing without thanking three very significant people who really made a difference: Tina and Duane Gilson and Butch Schleicher. These three were the backbone of the event making it run smoothly creating a Spirit filled event where everyone had a good time. Thank you!

In the end you raised about \$2,400 toward the youth ministries. We have three senior high youth who were signed up to attend the National Youth Gathering this summer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. However, that event was completely cancelled this time around due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Since these three youth were so excited to be going to such an event, I have decided to take them to another alternative that will feed their need for a spiritual mountain top event. Now, these three youth haven't really been to any type of an event like this before, so I looked for something that might be a little less intimidating. We are going to attend a NYG alternative at the Lutheran Retreat Camp and Conferences (LRCC) site in Oak Glen, California.

The site, Luther Glen Farm, sits on 40 acres and includes a lodge, spacious cabins, a retreat center, barn, farm animals, a garden, and lots of fresh produce. All participants will be given ample time to enjoy the farm, garden, dogs, sheep, goats, alpacas, chickens, pigs & all the surrounding beauty of the site.

The event is titled **Rebound**. Rebound is for high school youth program that features all-group gatherings, guest speakers, service with local organizations, food trucks, camp-style fun, nightlife, workshops, excursions, and Disneyland! The camp is partnering with our friends from California Lutheran University & Lutheran Social Services to help bring this "gathering-like" event.

I have been a huge supporter of summer camp and youth programs all of my adult life. Camp and the National Youth Gatherings are what showed me God's calling to become an ordained minister in the ELCA. There is something spiritual that happens at camp for those young people who attend. They tend to be the ones who live out their faith after high school and continue to be active in the church! For the summer of 2023, it is my hope to get our middle schoolers and Confirmation students to attend our synod's Camp-formation program which is a local program lead by Youth leaders and Pastors.

The book, Sacred Play-grounds is a practical theology project that the author, Jacob Sorenson, seamlessly weaves together theology, church history, scripture, and empirical research about the impacts of Christian summer camp on campers.

The studies found in this book reveal that camp experiences have statistically significant impact on multiple measurements of faith formation. The outcomes are much more than a simple “camp high,” which fades. Sorenson measured significant outcomes that are maintained at least three months after campers return home. Furthermore, there is additional empirical evidence that religious camp experiences show significant positive impacts on participants at least five years later, especially related to communal religious practices and identification with faith communities.

Camps are spaces where we can play together. At the heart of our longing for a playground is the deep-seated desire to be in relationship.” We need camping more than ever, as young people yearn for relationships. Camps are sanctuaries in time and space where Christ can be encountered, faith renewed and the joy of community discovered. Thanks again for making this possible this summer!

Peace,

Pastor Tony