

Sour Cream Chocolate Cake

Ingredients

- * 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- * 1 large egg
- * 3 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- * 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- * 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- * 2 (1 ounce) squares semi-sweet baking chocolate, melted
- * 2 cups all-purpose flour
- * 1 1/3 cups unsweetened cocoa, divided
- * 1 tablespoon baking soda
- * 1/2 teaspoon salt
- * 1 cup warm water
- * 1 1/4 cups Daisy Brand Sour Cream, divided
- * 1/2 cup softened butter
- * 3 cups powdered sugar
- * 1/4 cup milk

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour two 8-inch baking pans; set aside.
2. In a large mixer bowl, add vegetable oil, egg, and 2 teaspoons vanilla extract. Beat at medium speed until well-mixed (1 minute). Add brown sugar and granulated sugar; continue beating, scraping bowl often, until well-mixed (1 minute). Add the melted chocolate. Continue beating, scraping bowl often, until well-mixed (1 minute).
3. In small bowl stir together flour, 2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt. Add the flour mixture to chocolate mixture alternately with water, beating well after each addition. Add 1 cup sour cream; mix well. Pour into prepared pans and bake until a wooden toothpick inserted in center of cakes comes out clean (about 30 to 35 minutes). Remove cakes from the oven; cool 10 minutes. Remove the cakes from the pans; cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, in medium bowl add 1/2 cup softened butter; beat at high speed until creamy (1 to 2 minutes). Add 2/3 cup cocoa powder and 1 teaspoon vanilla; continue beating, scraping bowl often, until mixture is creamy (1 to 2 minutes). Add the powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the milk and 1/4 cup sour cream; continue beating, scraping bowl often, until creamy.
5. Frost the sides and top of cake. Garnish if desired.

Spring has Sprung

Spring is an exciting time around your camp and conference center! New life awakens and erupts as flowers bloom, trees show off a new shade of green, and the critters and birds start making a joyful noise to the Lord. It is a time of the year where it is easy to see God's handiwork in the gift and beauty of creation. It is also one of the busiest times of the year as we welcome numerous church retreats, school groups, and participants in our Confirmation and Spring Bash programs. As a backdrop to all of this excitement is the building energy in preparing for another amazing summer of transformation, faith formation, and fun. Summer camp will be here soon and our staff are getting ready for another season of encountering God in incredible ways. While there is much excitement and activity, Cedarkirk remains a place apart from the busyness of our daily lives. It is a place where folks can take a moment to recharge, to reflect, to listen for God's call, and to focus on relationships with one another. We hope that you will find quiet moments in your daily lives to encounter God in new ways that refresh your spirit. On May 2nd, from 1:00pm-5:00pm, we will be hosting our second Open House of 2015, a great opportunity for guests to pause from the busyness of life and enjoy Cedarkirk. Please visit www.cedarkirk.org/open-house to learn more about the event and activities offered that day. We look forward to seeing you at camp!

It Is Time To Celebrate!

On May 2nd from 10:30am to 1:00pm, we will be holding our annual Friends of Cedarkirk celebration and luncheon. This is a time to hear about all that is new and planned for the future at Cedarkirk and to help decide how the Friends Fund is designated. It is also a time to celebrate and thank all those who help support this special place apart. We will conclude our time with a special lunch of thanks for all that you have helped us accomplish in God's name. All who have given to Cedarkirk in the past 12 months are invited to attend and you can RSVP at info@cedarkirk.org or (813) 685-4224 ext. 2. If you would like to make a gift, you may do so online (www.cedarkirk.org/support) or by contacting the camp office. We are so grateful for the many people who uplift this ministry with their prayers and financial support!



Spring 2015

Upcoming Events:

- **Shepherd's Sabbath**

April 6—8, 2015

- **Open House**

May 2, 2015

- **Summer Camp**

June 14, 2015 to August 7, 2015

- **Homecoming**

September 4—6, 2015

- **Falltastic**

October 2—3, 2015

Visit our website for more information on these and other programs that Cedarkirk offers.

Cedarkirk Staff:

- Rev. John Reiter**

Executive Director

- Mark Orendorf**

Assistant Director

- Matt Shick**

Program Director

- Kevin Taylor**

Facilities Director

- Jackie Butler**

Food Service Director

- Karin Dale**

Event Coordinator

- Patricia Holloway**

Office Manager

S'mores & More

The Newsletter of the Presbyterian Camp & Conference Ministries of SW FL

Cedarkirk—A Thin Place

A lot of people like to use the phrase "thin place" to describe their camp. A thin place: where we stand in a space that seems so sacred that we sense God's presence in ways we find difficult in our everyday lives. There is a truth to that for so many. Many members of our churches would echo this sentiment, whether they attended as child or adult, stayed for a brief visit or were on staff for a whole summer. Though Cedarkirk is that place for our own churches, this article is about the other groups that our readers may not be aware of.

Last month, Cedarkirk hosted a group that serves children who have recently experienced the death of a family member. There were silent tears, audible sobs, and lots of hugs and laughter as counselors gave campers space and permission to grieve. The weekend consisted of a drum circle, zip lining, a memorial service, and grieving workshops. Cedarkirk became that thin place that allowed grief to be expressed through visual art, words, song, and actions.

Another group to highlight is our Christmas International House where international college students spend their Christmas break with families and at Cedarkirk. During a time when they are asked to leave their dorms these students are not only invited to a place, but into a caring community. Students are always amazed that a family would open their home to a total stranger and Cedarkirk staff are always encouraged by the many

cultures coming together and living in harmony.

Then there is the Woman to Woman program where mentors of teenage mothers walk side-by-side through the tough choices these young mothers need to make. These mentors, due to their mantra that they never ask of their mentee something they are not willing to do themselves, push themselves beyond what they would do ordinarily: like climbing our high ropes course with much fear and trembling. Cedarkirk is a thin place for both the mentors and the young mothers who witness the lengths to which their mentor will go in their commitment and support of them.

We have also offered a Christmas retreat for residents of a homeless shelter. For them, the gift of open space, a room with privacy, no locked doors, and the abundance of good hot meals are luxuries that allow for growth, introspection, and renewal to continue the struggle to financial stability.

We have welcomed hundreds of foster children through three different agencies, thousands of school children through an outdoor, experiential education program. We also host annual weekend retreats for men's and women's NA groups, as well as a group that focuses on social and emotional learning for youth. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does shed light on some of what happens in this place apart and how groups outside of our Presbyteries also benefit from time spent in a thin place.

“One More” Campaign

Summer Camp is just around the corner and Cedarkirk is rolling out a new campaign to encourage churches to connect more fully to this place apart. We are challenging every church to send just one more child or youth to summer camp in 2015! That means over 100 more children and youth will get to experience the love of Christ and have transforming faith experiences in the beauty of God's creation!

Sending a young person to camp is one of the most effective forms of Christian nurture a congregation can provide. Camp provides kids the space to put into practice what they've learned in church and Sunday school as they strive to build their own Christ-centered community in their small groups and within the camp as a whole.

If you would like to take the “One More” challenge and want more information, please visit our website: www.cedarkirk.org/one-more. There you will find a listing of how many campers your church sent in 2014 as well as resources for promoting Cedarkirk's programs. Thank you for helping us share the love of Jesus with even more campers this year!



Nuts and Bolts

Cedarkirk has been busy this winter season with work on upgrading the floor in the pool bath house. We have laid down a new quarry tile which has improved the safety from slipping hazards and made the rooms look more modern. We will complete the project with new exhaust fans. This is but one of many projects that keep Cedarkirk safe and sound, and it also offers opportunities for groups to volunteer to lend a hand and support the ongoing ministry that is Cedarkirk.

People Power

In addition to attending events and providing financial support, Cedarkirk has numerous projects around camp that groups could adopt and help make a reality. Projects range from grounds work (clearing trails and brush) to painting (interiors and exteriors of buildings) to facility improvement and construction. Groups of any size and composition (youth, men, women, families) are invited to contact the camp office (813) 685-4224 ext. 2 to explore opportunities that match your group's interests and skills. Adopting a project can strengthen your group through

Why Camp Matters

- The average American youth spends 3 hrs, 11 mins on the phone, computer, or video games each day—and only 4 minutes outside.
- The average child spends less than 6.5 minutes per week engaged in meaningful conversation with parents, teachers, or mentors.
- In a week of camp, children and youth have 5,340 minutes to:
 - think creatively without distractions and solve problems
 - challenge themselves in a high adventure environment
 - build a temporary community with caring, adult role models where they can take risks and ask important questions
 - appreciate the beauty and complexity of nature
 - connect to God and peers in a supportive and safe place

community building and a shared experience as well as enhancing your camp and conference center. In addition to facility improvement projects, Cedarkirk also relies on the help of volunteer nurses and worship leaders throughout the summer program. For more information about how you could help in one of these areas, please contact us.



Discernment Through Service—Kent Shader

This year has been a fantastic time for me spiritually and emotionally. During my time as a DTS participant I was able to take a very methodical approach to understanding where the Lord has called me. Even though my understanding as to what direction I am heading hasn't changed much, the time I have taken to slowly seek Him in it has helped me feel more confident in my direction as a whole. I feel that I am called to ministry, likely working with kids, but that is still such a wide spectrum of opportunity. Camp ministry has played a pivotal role in my spiritual development and it seems like a great place to start moving. I am at the point where I now feel confident moving forward into youth ministry, taking it as it comes rather than worrying that this path may not be the one

for me. It is now more a matter of gaining experience and finding a “home” for myself – a place where I feel He is moving and I am at peace with my position there. During my time in the DTS program I have experienced ups and downs in my faith as I took a hard look into the driving factors for my life, ultimately landing on a place of greater stability and confidence in His ever-present ability to provide. I have grown in my emotional maturity, and I feel I have a better understanding of how to conduct myself in a work environment. Through great mentors and the benefit of bumping into and sharing life with a wide spectrum of people, I feel like I have been presented with many opportunities to grow. It is truly an opportunity for young adults like myself to thoughtfully transition from the life of a

student to one of a member of a functioning society. Time will tell where I end up, but my experience here has been very formative. I am extremely thankful for the experience I have had and I feel it is a wonderful addition to an already powerful ministry.



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Discernment Through Service—Claire Chipman

“Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”

This verse, Jeremiah 6:16, is the best way I can define discernment after my eight months in the Discernment Through Service (DTS) program. I wasn't new to Cedarkirk when I began DTS: I've filled the roles of retreat participant, summer camper, and counselor, claiming Cedarkirk as my second home since middle school. This place has served me in innumerable ways, providing me with some of my earliest mentors,

my most authentic relationships, and my clearest encounters with God. As an indecisive college senior, I knew one thing was certain: the place where I would be most supported and challenged while wrestling with the big questions of vocational calling and purpose would be Cedarkirk. Through our weekly DTS meetings dedicated to personal reflection and spiritual growth, I've gained a stronger relationship with Christ and greater confidence in knowing how to seek His path for me, one step at a time. This fall, I'll be attending UNC-Chapel Hill to pursue a Ph.D. in sociology; until then, I'll be

thankful for the chance to serve this ministry, counting every shriek of a child jumping off of the zip line and every evening spent around the campfire as blessings.

Want to learn more about Discernment Through Service?

Visit www.cedarkirk.org/dts