

The Future of Cedarkirk

We have embarked on a \$4,000,000 capital campaign to construct a new dining hall for many reasons — Cedar Lodge presents challenging access and difficult use for those with mobility issues; the existing dining hall can no longer support the demand as we serve more and more people; meeting space is also limited for programmatic and guest use.

By expanding lodging accommodations and building a new kitchen, dining and meeting space, we are:

- Adding 24 beds allowing us to serve as many as an additional 2700 people each year.
- Building a new Dining Facility, with a capacity of 250, which will be accessible to all and enable us to meet current needs and welcome future growth.
- Creating a scalable space that is flexible for a variety of groups.

We want to give a big shout out to Cedarkirk's Board, Steering Committee, Ambassadors, the Dana Beck Fancher Fund, Kirkwood Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota as well as the many others who have supported our campaign during this early phase. Because of this support we have raised over \$450,000 for the new dining hall and cottage!

Nuts and Bolts

Old, rickety and shaky has its scary and sometimes charming appeal but everything eventually needs to be replaced. So, with the help of many hands, the outside stairway on the east end of Pine Lodge has been rebuilt. When you see Erv Skovgaard, Claude Carter or Jason Hebbard, thank them for a job well done. We have a number of projects planned in preparation for summer camp. If your church has a group of volunteers that would be willing to help for the day, please contact Kevin Taylor at kevin@cedarkirk.org or 813.685.4224, ext. 6.



Presbyterian Camp and Conference Ministries of SW FL
1920 Streetman Drive
Lithia, FL 33547
(813) 685-4224



Spring 2017

Upcoming Events:

- **Confirmation Retreat**
March 31—April 2, 2017
- **Shepherd's Sabbath**
April 17—19, 2017
- **Spring Bash**
April 21—22, 2017
April 28—29, 2017
May 5—6, 2017
- **Open House**
May 13, 2017
- **Summer Camp-weekly**
June 4 to July 28, 2017
- **Family Retreat**
September 1—3, 2017

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
- Rebeca Franca**
Associate Program Director

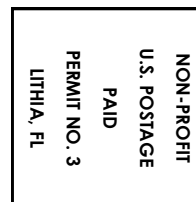
S'mores & More

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

Summer Curriculum Strives to Keep "Camp Feeling" Going All Year Long

I never tire of hearing stories of community, faith, and authentic self transformation and growth from our guests. Summer campers, in particular, speak of a "camp feeling." It might be more accurate to say they speak around it because the "camp feeling" practically defies explanation. As a feeling, it's difficult to fully define or explicate for anyone that has not directly experienced it themselves. The "camp feeling" is a strange conglomeration of: connectedness to others; loyalty to a physical place; extreme receptivity to God and the workings of the Spirit; fearless acceptance of self; unyielding commitment to a culture that values silliness, openness, and authenticity; and an unabashed embrace of nature, sweat, and near-constant singing. If you check out our YouTube channel (search for: CedarkirkVideos) you can watch campers describing aspects of the "camp feeling" in our end-of-the-week videos from summer camp. Many campers equate that feeling with camp – and only with camp – and to an extent, the camp experience is strikingly unique. However, the development of

are not exclusive to camp, which is why this summer's theme is so exciting! Our curriculum this summer, **BRANCHING OUT**, is all about how campers can take that special feeling home with them and keep it going all year. Stories from the Bible will illustrate the lives of individuals and groups who used prayer, relationships, family, and more to stay intimately connected to God and to build meaningful communities around them. Our prayer is that campers will revel in the "camp feeling" while they're here, but understand that they can take it with them when they go. That they can lean on others and their truest, best version of themselves wherever they are. And that they – together with families, congregations, and friends – can recreate the "camp feeling" in each of their communities. That's the kind of world I want to live in! Find more information about our summer camp programs at www.cedarkirk.org. We'll see you this summer!



The Cedarkirk Family

One warm, sunny day we were faced with a dilemma. We had a guest with cerebral palsy that desperately wanted to zip down our zip tower. We could get her up the stairwell to the platform without a problem and, once harnessed in, the actual zipping was simple enough. It was disembarking and climbing down the ladder that was going to be problematic. So we readied a pick-up truck to pull up under the line after she zipped and were able to rest her on the cab, unhook her, and carry her back to the ground.

There was pure joy on her face as she zipped along the cable through the corridor of trees with her cheering church family lined along both sides. Cheering, some with tears in their eyes (ok, maybe

just this staff member), for their friend who got to experience the freedom to fly.


This of course is not an isolated event when it comes to people experiencing community and finding trust and grace from a supportive family. These moments manifest themselves through conversations around meals, sharing in the gazebo, worships in the Prayer Garden and on our zip line and challenge courses.

We have people from all walks of life come through our gates. Those with developmental disabilities, youth who are excited about the possibilities of their faith journey and those further on the path that may be struggling to renew that energy. We have those who constantly darken the doors of the church to, those who

have never been inside a church. During Christmas International House we have students who are Christian, Muslim, and those who claim no faith at all. Then there are times when Cedarkirk is filled with folks from 12-step programs or teen mothers and their mentors. There are lots of tears and sharing during these retreats that show just what a special place Cedarkirk can be for so many.

If you would like to introduce someone to Cedarkirk so they can be a part of this family, consider introducing them to this place through our Open House on May 13th from 1:00-5:00. It's a great way to get a small taste of what this camp ministry is all about. For more information please visit our website.

Friends of Cedarkirk Luncheon—May 13th

 Whether it is through the ministries of summer camp, year-round events, or welcoming groups in the name of Christ, we hear over and over again how Cedarkirk transforms lives in unexpected ways. The ministry at Cedarkirk matters and your support makes a difference. Your gifts help to ensure that everyone experiences God in new and profound ways. Your gifts enable us to care for and improve our facilities and grounds. Your gifts strengthen this ministry's reach and impact in serving others.

In gratitude for these gifts, we will be holding our annual Friends of

Cedarkirk celebration and luncheon on May 13th from 10:00am to 1:00pm. Our time together will include an opportunity to hear about our capital campaign and vision for new and improved facilities at Cedarkirk as well as the chance to decide how the Friends Fund is designated. We will conclude our celebration with a special lunch of thanks for all that you have helped us accomplish in God's name. Please note that our Open House will also immediately follow this luncheon and you are welcome to stay and enjoy some camp activities that afternoon.

If you plan to attend the Friends of Cedarkirk luncheon, please

email the camp office at info@cedarkirk.org or gives us a call at (813) 685-4224, ext. 2. We look forward to celebrating with you.



Twice the Fun at Traveling Day Camp

The anticipation builds as we approach summer 2017!

This year traveling day camp has doubled in size from 2016, which means twice the campers, twice the laughter, and twice the fun. We are excited to continue the relationships with the churches from our first summer, and to start new day camp relationships with new churches.

Please join us in praying for our upcoming partnerships with the congregations who have signed up: Forest Hills Presbyterian Church in Tampa, Venice Presbyterian Church in Venice,

Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Bradenton, Hope Presbyterian Church in Winter Haven, Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church in Naples, Peace Memorial Presbyterian Church in Clearwater, McLeod Presbyterian Church in Bartow, Trinity Presbyterian Church in New Port Richey, Palma Sola Presbyterian Church in Bradenton, First Presbyterian Church in Sarasota, Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church in Tampa, Peace Presbyterian Church in Lakewood Ranch, and, First Presbyterian Church in Brandon.

We still have a couple of slots available, so if your congregation is interested in hosting a week of transforming ministry for your Kindergarten through 5th grade campers, email Rebeca Franca at Rebeca@cedarkirk.org for more information. We can't wait to see what God has in store for our day campers this summer!

Save the Date!

**FAMILY RETREAT WEEKEND
SEPTEMBER 1—3, 2017**

PCCM/Cedarkirk Board Member Corner—Michael McCormack

My name is Michael McCormack and I'm honored to be the vice-president of the Cedarkirk Board. When I became Pastor at First Presbyterian Church Brandon in the fall of 2015, I was very glad to be asked by our Presbytery's nominating committee to serve on "the camp committee." I have been part of Christian camping since I was 12 years old. In that nearly 30 years I have learned some amazing lessons. Let me share a few of them.

Just because it says it's non-toxic does not mean it tastes good. In high school, I was a camper at a small camp in Ohio and I landed the gig of MC'ing the talent show. In a Robin Williams-type moment, I thought I would make everyone laugh by drinking some of the soapy water one uses to blow bubbles. I checked first to make sure it wasn't toxic. It said "non-toxic" on the container. And while people did laugh, I learned

that "non-toxic" is not synonymous with "delicious." But thanks to camp, I had a chance to get up in front of people and work on skills that I use each Sunday as a Pastor (but without bubbles).

Whether you're a counselor or a camper, the friends you make at camp are friends you have for a life-time. When I was in college I worked at the John Knox Center near Knoxville and worked closely with other university students from Belfast. A couple April's ago, I was in Belfast and got a chance to catch up with two of my fellow counselors. We remembered the fun we had together, the long nights, the canoe trips, the kitchen raids. I don't know if the campers had as much fun as the counselors. And now as we all have gotten married and had kids, it's still fun to share our lives together. I will be friends with my co-counselors for the rest of my

life, and I can thank God and camp for that.

When everything is taken away, there is God. I think one of the biggest lessons I learned at camp, and something that I have been thinking about quite a bit lately is the following: There are so many distractions in life, so many voices, so many opinions that want to lay claim to us. Camp showed me what happens when all that is taken away. When all the opinions are gone, when the voices are silenced, when there are fewer distractions, it is shocking to find out that God is right there. God has been there all along.

Most of us need to go to Cedarkirk in order to interact with God. We know we can count on God to be there, right there at Cedarkirk. The amazing thing is that Cedarkirk can help us learn how to connect with God everywhere.