



Join us October 11th for our annual Senior Adult Retreat and spend the day at Cedarkirk in fellowship with other adults! Enjoy an engaging workshop lead by certified Christian Educator Linda Beckham, a delicious home-cooked meal, and free time for games, rocking on the porch, or strolling around Cedarkirk. Cost is \$20 per person.

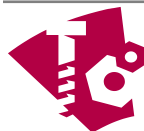
For information or to register, please contact Karin Dale at [karin@cedarkirk.org](mailto:karin@cedarkirk.org) or 813.685.4224 x2.



December 22-23, 2017

Join us for 24 hours of fun, faith-building, fellowship, and fantastic food as we learn about – and prepare for – the birth of Christ and what that means for our lives today.

## Nuts and Bolts

 In our last newsletter, it was mentioned that beds were to be replaced in Pine Lodge. The Friends of Cedarkirk provided the funding for the purchase of these new mattresses and box springs. I am pleased to announce that the beds have arrived and are now in place. Due to the generosity of the Friends' Fund, mattresses in Cedar Lodge were also replaced. We know how important it is to have a good night's sleep and hope our guests enjoy the new comforts in our lodges.

We have a number of projects planned this fall. 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](mailto: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



Fall 2017

### Upcoming Events:

- **Family Retreat**  
September 1—3, 2017
- **Falltastic**  
September 29—30, 2017
- **Senior Adult Retreat**  
October 11, 2017
- **FUSION: Youth Retreat**  
November 10—12, 2017  
November 17—19, 2017
- **Christmas Retreat**  
December 22—23, 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

## Partners Make the Difference: Love Kindness

Beyond financial and prayerful support, the churches we partner with often provide us with opportunities to serve different groups – to cast the net wider, as they say. This summer we were blessed with the opportunity to provide a summer camp experience for a new group of campers. One of our supporting churches raised money to send kids from a low-income elementary school to Cedarkirk for a transforming week of camp.

One story of transformation from this summer involved a boy from that school group – we'll call him Andrew – who came to us with very low self-esteem. A difficult home life, underachievement at school, and bullying from classmates had effectively stamped out any self-worth or value he felt for himself.

His counselors, who were more than effusive with their praise and encouragement, were rebuffed by Andrew at every opportunity. "You have to tell all of us we're special." "You just have to say that." These retorts became his common refrain.

Frustrated, but undeterred, his counselors pressed on, showering him with even more love, giving him new opportunities to shine, and highlighting aspects of his character they appreciated and wanted him to know were special and unique. None of it seemed to make any difference. He drifted through most camp activities with a certain lack of engagement and malaise.

Andrew did show interest in one thing, however: the ring game at the Pavilion. Each day during free time he would stand at the same post and swing a metal ring suspended by a piece of string toward its corresponding hook. Maybe he truly enjoyed it, or perhaps it was just a solitary activity that helped him pass time. Regardless, he became really good at it. One evening toward the end of camp, he hooked the ring ten times. Then fifty. By the time he hooked it for the hundredth time there was a bit of a crowd gathered around.

As he approached two-hundred, nearly everyone stood watching. All of the other junior campers, all of the senior high leadership campers, and all of the staff were encircling Andrew, cheering and chanting as he hooked the ring again and again. When he hit it for the two-hundredth time the assembled crowd went wild. People were screaming his name, jumping up and down, and clapping him on the back. Long-time high school campers were telling him they'd never seen anyone make that many successful attempts. Younger campers were eagerly debating whether he could do 200 – no, 500! – more before the end of free time. Andrew took a mere second to soak in the adulation and went back to the ring game.

That moment was unplanned – it happened organically and it happened because God was present. Every person in the community knew that rallying around that particular individual at that particular time was what needed to happen. That is the Holy Spirit at work; the presence of God intimately known. These are the kinds of transforming events that happen at camp – that stick with a person for a lifetime.

Scripture tells us that the voice of God is often a still, small whisper. But that night, when the whisper was amplified through fifty cheering campers, it became a roar. We may or may not see Andrew at camp again, but we pray and we trust that he will hold on to that moment, and that when he looks back on it, he will see God at work.



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## Partners Make The Difference: Do Justice

Challenge to Change (C2C) is a program where we partner with churches, and occasionally college ministries, to work with local ministries and explore issues of justice. The power of a typical day is palpable; working with and beside those who struggle to make ends meet and then returning to Cedarkirk to discuss how we are to be an instrument in bringing God's "kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven."

Each week, we take a hard look at the injustices around us. The group can choose to be overwhelmed or challenged. This summer one moment that sort of amplified this was the silence immediately following a viewing of a film

entitled [Beyond Belief](#). This film tells a story of two widows (widowed on 9/11) who chose to love and care for widows in Afghanistan, raising money to give over 400 women the opportunity to start cottage industries. It's a powerful film and, after turning the lights back on there is this brief moment of silence, where the words aren't there and people let the silence speak. Then the silence breaks and each person shares that key moment of the film that spoke to them, often times being different for each person.

Cedarkirk partners with churches to bring their skills and time to assist ministries like Beth-El Farm Worker Ministry. However, the goal of this

partnership doesn't end there. Both the hope of each church and we here at Cedarkirk are the same. That each individual leaves with a greater awareness and commitment to changing our world for the better and listening to God's call to love by seeking and creating justice in all we do. Going away and immersing one's self in an environment, sharing an experience with your faith community, and being very intentional in conversation and prayer allows for God to make a lasting impression on our place in this world. C2C truly does challenge our youth and adult groups to change our thought, our worship, and our view of the world. We are so grateful for this partnership.

## Partners Make the Difference: Walk Humbly with Your God

Every traveling day camp week is different: the buildings, the distance from Cedarkirk, the volunteers, and the number of kids all change. The beauty of it all is that even with that diversity, the feeling of camp still remains, and the partnership between ministries becomes very visible.

Forest Hills Presbyterian Church in Tampa was one of two churches on our first week of camp. It was their first experience with our day camp program. Every congregation has a goal and a purpose for their day camp week; this was no different with Forest Hills. As three unique parts of their community felt comfortable at their church campus, their hope was to bring these groups together in a unique way. In the words of their pastor Rev. Claudia Henderson "We were hoping that Cedarkirk would be the glue that would bind them together

and it was." A Cub Scout Troop meets at the church for night pack meetings, their church members, and the children from their non-profit ministry of their Learning Center.

On the first day, campers were excited to be in groups with their friends. They were a little nervous about meeting their new counselors. You could see which kids felt comfortable going into the sanctuary and which kids were comfortable going into the classrooms. The first day we talked about 'connecting in this place' and by the end of the day you could tell that this was going to be a special week and a powerful place for uniting. As the activities unfolded and games of gaga ball were played, you could see no distinction between the Cub Scouts, the church members and the learning center participants.

There was no distinction about which kids came from which group. As we continued our week we didn't just talk about connecting, but we were able to experience it first-hand. Rev. Claudia Henderson also counted some unexpected connections - "One church volunteer had just made Eagle Scout and became the idol of the Cub Scouts enrolled in the camp. Another had been mentored by a former Associate Pastor, and he got to mentor that pastor's daughter throughout the week. In so many ways the circle just kept growing." As our Traveling Day Camp ministry continues to grow and partner with ministries across Tampa Bay and Peace River Presbyteries, we thank God for connecting us as one body and we continue to ask God to connect us to further his Kingdom.

## Double Your Impact Today

From now until **September 30th**, our Capital Campaign has a special opportunity. A very generous donor has agreed to **match every dollar** given or pledged to the campaign up to **\$250,000**. This is a unique opportunity to double the generosity of those who care so much about this special place.

Cedarkirk's founders had a vision to provide a place where children and adults could encounter God in new ways and build community in a natural setting. Today, Cedarkirk annually ministers to over 15,000 people through meaningful programs, unique retreat opportunities, and a continued commitment to being a place apart. As Cedarkirk's ministry has grown, our ability to serve is challenged by the physical

limitations of our facilities. The current dining hall in Cedar Lodge presents difficult access for those with mobility issues and limits the number of guests and the manner in which they can be served. This constrains the ministry of hospitality that has been enjoyed at Cedarkirk for the last 45 years.

To address these challenges and better minister to those we serve, we have embarked on a three-year capital campaign for Cedarkirk's future. In this campaign, we hope to construct a new dining hall, develop new office and administrative space, build new adult friendly lodging, and renovate Cedar Lodge for additional meeting space.

With an eye towards sustainability in the future, this capital campaign

focuses on improving the accessibility of our buildings and expanding our facilities so that we continue to be a place apart to build up the body of Christ in love. We are grateful for the privilege of being a blessing in the lives of so many children, youth, and adults.

We invite you to consider partnering with Cedarkirk in our effort to strengthen this vital ministry. This campaign includes the opportunity to give at many levels and we welcome the chance to talk with you more about this effort. As always, thank you for your prayers and support for Cedarkirk's ministry. For more information, please visit our website: [www.cedarkirk.org/campaign](http://www.cedarkirk.org/campaign)

## PCCM/Cedarkirk Board Member Corner—Rev. Denise Lay

When I was a child, some of my favorite books were *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C.S. Lewis. The first book: *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, is an introduction to the amazing land of Narnia and its inhabitants. The main human characters are the Pevensie children, Lucy, Edmund, Susan, and Peter. While playing hide and seek one day, the youngest child, Lucy, discovers an old wardrobe. Miraculously, she finds that the wardrobe doubles as an entryway into the magical world of Narnia. In the tales that follow, the Pevensie children have many adventures in this special place that is set apart.

Cedarkirk may not be Narnia, and you certainly don't have to enter it through an old, dusty wardrobe, but it is most definitely a special place apart. Driving down the narrow lane into Cedarkirk is a bit like entering a magical world in which time slows

down, stress melts away, and one is introduced into a beautiful, wooded setting where adventures await.

There is something for all ages at Cedarkirk, and something about Cedarkirk which touches all ages. Over the years, I have seen children's lives transformed at camp as they learned about their Savior and discovered their place in God's kingdom. I have watched many of those children grow and develop and return as camp counselors themselves. I have visited Cedarkirk with adults and senior adults who have had their hearts lifted by the beauty of creation that surrounds them. I have participated in family retreats, where family and friends have been drawn closer together by the spirit of comradery that is a part of Cedarkirk. I have attended retreats and training at Cedarkirk and felt enlivened and enriched by the experiences.

Cedarkirk is truly a special, maybe even magical, place apart. Future generations may need this special place even more than we can imagine. Let's do all we can to assure that it is here for them. Here's some ideas of how you can help:

- \*Contribute to the Capital Campaign
- \*Invite someone from Cedarkirk to speak at your church
- \*Volunteer to help with projects around the property
- \*Serve as a Board Member or volunteer
- \*Include a bequest for Cedarkirk in your will
- \*Encourage your church to hold a Family Retreat at Cedarkirk
- \*Encourage children and youth to attend Cedarkirk camps

Hope to see you at camp!