

✠ every life impacted for Christ

2015

# PLCBC MINISTRY REPORT

YEAR END GIVING OPPORTUNITY



*Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp*  
Onkama, Michigan

## **Greetings from Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp, a Place Where Every Life is Impacted for Christ.**

This is the 69th year for Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp. There have been 69 years of bonfires, chapels, big games, camper/staff challenges and seeing God work in new and exciting ways. Over the years, tens of thousands of campers, young and old, have received the healing touch that time at Portage Lake can provide.

Since 1946 there have been a lot of changes. We've gone from being a small seasonal camp to a year-round retreat and conference facility. From tents to cabins, summer-only to year-round, and from the Whitehouse to in-cabin restrooms. God has been crafting His camp here over the years. Through all of these changes there is one thing that has not changed – camp's commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and His great commission to the world – to make disciples of all nations.

I remember talking to one of our founding camp families and hearing that camp was designed to take young campers away from their familiar environments up to the northern lake country and impact them with the gospel in new and fun ways. Staff consisted of men and women who had little theological training, but hearts to serve God in ways that often reached WAY out of their comfort zones. Campers made the drive to camp crammed into old church vans and busses or family station wagons. They drove with the expectation of hitting those last curves on M22 and navigating the last few dips before arriving at camp – a hallowed place. Camp was a gift that was open

every summer and it was anticipated more than a family vacation to Disney World.

Today at camp we strive to celebrate those same things that motivated our founders – getting people away so they can hear God in new ways and enjoy His creation at Portage Lake. As we celebrate the 69 years of camp, we have been focusing on these areas of service:

- *Grow our staff into lifelong leaders doing lifelong Kingdom work.*
- *Impact our local community through service and ministry.*
- *Be a vital tool for our churches and conference.*
- *Expand the offerings we provide campers on site and off.*
- *Add activities and amenities that bless campers from across the age spectrum.*
- *Serve a more diverse group of campers.*
- *Remain committed to the Word of God as our guide and ruler.*

69 years of service and hoping that every life we come in contact with is changed by the work of the Holy Spirit. Please consider joining us as a camper, and just as importantly as a donor in supporting the needs and ministry of Portage Lake. Thank you for the blessing of allowing me to serve you for over 20 years. I love camp and I know you love it too!

*Dave Nesburg  
Executive Director at Portage Lake*

## **Blessings and Hello to the Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp Family,**

We thank God for your connection to this special place in northern Michigan where God continues to bless so many people who experience this wonderful ministry. Once again, we are having a phenomenal year at camp. Our staff and speakers are exceptional and campers continue to be filled with God's Holy Spirit through the work of these fantastic individuals. Every day they serve as God's hands and feet and we cannot thank them enough.

We continue to strive to be God's servants; to care for and improve PLCBC with every given opportunity. We hope you've enjoyed the ongoing improvements and pray for your continued support as we look forward to 2016. It's an exciting time as we work on planning a new Dining Hall and maintaining this awesome place we call Camp.

God has great plans for PLCBC and we thank Him for your continued support. Your faithful gifts have

helped build the Gym, the Welcome Center, the Lake-side Lodge, the Chapel and every structure on camp. Although they are just buildings, these places provide space for God's spirit to move.

Matthew 21:16 says,

They asked Jesus, "Do you hear the things these children are saying?" Jesus answered, "Yes. Haven't you read in the Scriptures, 'You have taught children and babies to sing praise?'"

As a member of Harbert Community Church, I get to hear first hand from kids how their life was impacted by Jesus at camp. One camper said, "Those speakers and counselors at PLCBC ... they get God!!! And now, because of them I get God too!" Through the ministry of Portage Lake, God is teaching his children (of every age!) to sing His praise.

I also want to give a special recognition for Dave Nesburg. For 20 years, he has lovingly dedicated himself to the ministry of Portage Lake and shown great leadership as our director. His guiding hand is a blessing to all. The experience that he helps create is a true example of God's hand at work in our world.

So once again, we thank you for your prayers and financial support in this ministry. May God continue to bless camp ministries. God Bless,

*The John Carlson Family and PLCBC Board*



# FINANCIALS

## We depend on campers and loyal supporters to keep camp a vital ministry. God is faithful and camp is healthy!

2015 has been an amazing year for the Ministry of Portage Lake. Here is a brief overview of some financial numbers from the end of 2014 and 2015: (as of 10/20/2015):

- Camper Fees - \$837,000 (up 2.5%)
  - Scholarship Costs - \$39,141 (up 12.6%) Shortfall of almost \$13,746!
  - Utilities - \$53,230 (up 4.4%)
  - Food Costs - \$111,230 (up 2%)
  - Maintenance Costs - \$49,477 (up 1.6%)
  - Camp Debt - \$171,000
  - Insurance Costs - \$42,300 (up 22%)
  - Donations - \$47,308 (so far - 2015 goal of \$142,000)\*
- \*We usually receive a bulk of our support at the end of the calendar year.

This year we broke all of our summer records for numbers of campers, but we also found ourselves facing the greatest scholarship needs ever. We are again seeing a growth in our fixed costs and our maintenance needs.

Our financial health is strong this year, but with growing camper scholarship needs, growing insurance and liability costs, and a growing number of buildings on the cusp of major repair and upkeep needs, camp is in need of support from our friends. Consider keeping the ministry strong by a financial gift in 2015!



# testimonies

## Nick Loubert – Summer Staff

This summer was my first working at Portage Lake. I came ready to pour myself into the campers and to really try to shine some of God's light in their lives. While I did my best every day to do that, God surprised and amazed me with the way He poured

into me through the campers He placed in my cabin every week.

One of my cabins this summer really stood out to me. In that cabin I had a kid with Down's syndrome. This camper showed me the boundless love of God in each and every one of his interactions with other campers and staff. Yet what amazed me the most was the way the rest of the cabin loved him and really accepted him as a child of God. This was amazing and reminded me of who the kingdom of God belongs to.

Not only did my campers shine a light in my life, but my fellow staff members did as well. I have never been a part of such a humble community. No matter how much work had to be done, how many tedious jobs there were to be completed or how many toilets needed to be cleaned, everyone did their part without a fuss, knowing that the mission of camp was bigger than themselves. I watched forty individuals this summer truly live their lives for the kingdom of God, and nothing provides a better atmosphere to grow in faith than that. One speaker always says that Portage Lake is a special place where Heaven comes down closer than most other places, and after one summer working there, I agree wholeheartedly.

## Patrick & Julianne Reyes – Family Campers

Portage Lake continues to play such an important role in our family. It all started when

Julianne came to Christ at kids' camp back in the early 1980's. It continues today by the impact it has on our four kids as we anticipate Family Camp 1 each year. Camp feels like home every July when we see families and friends we haven't seen in 365 days. Every time we set foot on camp, we feel the Holy Spirit's presence. It can be felt in the counselors, in the speakers and throughout the entire property.

Our kids have also started to attend kids camps: Jr. High, Trailblazers, and Pathfinders. This was a growing experience for all of them as they were able to experience God on their own. They are already eager for next summer!

This summer was really special as we were able to get 4 kids from Pontiac, Michigan sponsored through the generosity of Family Camp 1. We know that through the prayers that have laid the foundation of the Holy Spirit's power at PLCBC, the "Pontiac Kids" have been impacted and seeds have fallen on fertile ground. We know that Portage Lake has sown these seeds and will see it come to a full harvest! It was because of generous donations of the PLCBC family that this happened and we know it will effect eternity!

The Reyes family will always make PLCBC a priority in our lives and take every opportunity to invite others to experience Jesus in an amazing way at Portage Lake!



# Goals for 2016 and Beyond

# GOALS FOR 2016

We have been blessed over the past few years with generous support and a robust vision that has seen camp grow and change in many ways. We have added new and exciting buildings and activities. We are so thankful that God has placed the desire and the means to help camp grow as a ministry in the hearts of Portage Lake supporters. For 2016 and beyond we have some big, exciting, camp-altering dreams that we see God's hand guiding:

- 1. A completely new and enlarged dining hall! Our board and building committee are hard at work planning for a new and amazing facility to replace our current inadequate building.*
  - *We have contracted Mark Post from Post Associates Architects to design an improved and enlarged dining hall.*
  - *We seek to improve our kitchen for efficiency and effective operation.*
  - *We seek to take advantage of the lakefront location of the current dining hall to create a space that is beautiful, efficient, and more enjoyable to every guest.*
  - *We are in the final design stages and hope to release drawings soon.*
  - *We hope to launch a capital drive to make this happen early next year!*
- 2. Upgrade Retreat Center showers*
- 3. Add storage garage to new property*
- 4. Add two new high ropes course elements*
- 5. Increase scholarship opportunities*
- 6. Expand restrooms in Cabins 6, 7 and 8*
- 7. Chapel ventilation upgrade*



## Joe & Jackie Jeffrey – Family Campers

For our kids, PLCBC is on the same level as Disney World. It's a truly magical place where they experience God through His beautiful creation, an amazing staff and incredible campers. This year was no different for our family; we attended Family Camp 2 and had a wonderful week. We expanded our relationships with fellow campers, got to know the staff and encouraged them as they found God's path through their time at camp. Our kids were able to play with old friends, make new ones and benefit from a staff that is truly inspiring.

Some highlights were watching Aidan score a goal during the Camp vs. Staff soccer game. For an 8 year old this was a pretty big deal. And watching Amelia, our somewhat shy and reserved 6 year old, sing for the third year in a row in front of the entire camp. PLCBC encourages kids to step out of their comfort zone in a safe and secure environment in order to see their true potential. As parents, it's great to be able to spend quality time with our kids making crafts, swimming, playing sports and talking about the importance of a relationship with God.

Aidan attended the Pathfinders weekend and had an absolute blast. He picked up where Family Camp left off, exploring and having fun with friends. He met new kids and will be able to keep up with them over the years and we expect the same will be true for Amelia.

Our kids look up to the staff and talk about them throughout the year. The impact they have had on our family is truly profound. Our hope and prayer is that our kids will be able to pay the love and friendship forward and join staff when they are old enough. Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp is one of the happiest places on earth.



# testimonies

## Linnea Anderson – Summer Staff

It is difficult to put into words how incredible this past summer was. I count myself as one of the luckiest people in the world to have had the opportunity to work at a place where the mission is to impact lives for Christ.

The Kingdom of God is truly evident at Portage Lake. Campers have the opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ every day and experience His grace and love through the speaker, the staff members and fellow campers. There is nothing like worshipping with 200 kids beneath the canopy of trees at the new property. Watching campers open up to their counselors and each other on Wednesday nights showed me how evident God's presence was this summer. Summers at camp are powerful, and all year long these kids and their families anticipate their week-long adventure at camp.

I am eternally blessed to have been able to work summers at camp for the past several years. The Lord led me to a different position this year as waterfront director where I had the opportunity to see camp from a whole different perspective. As waterfront director, I not only had the chance to get to know campers, but to build deep friendships with many of the staff members. The relationships that I have been able to build at camp have changed my life. The friendships I have made through camp are life long and I cannot imagine my life without these people. The work that the Lord did in the lives of so many at camp this summer has changed the course of eternity and I am so grateful to have been a part of His work.



# Your financial support of camp is VITAL

*We need your help to impact more lives for the Kingdom.  
THIS IS YOUR CHANCE – give now!*

## During Summer 2015...

- 918 youth campers during programmed weeks at camp (Record!)
- 499 family campers over the summer
- 344 recommitments to Christ
- 60 first-time commitments to Jesus Christ
- Over 500 other guests during the busy summer months in addition to our summer programs

## Over the past year...

- We have served almost every junior high student in Manistee county
- Served as a meeting place for many local groups, businesses and leaders
- Gave almost \$40,000 in scholarships
- Had dozens of families strengthened at family camp
- Trained up S.W.I.M. Team (Students Working in Ministry) to be the church leaders of the future.

## We need...

- Financial gifts for repair and replacement of worn and used facilities and equipment
- Support for our Scholarship Program
- Support for capital projects to grow and improve camp
- Commitments to estate giving – future gifts to bless the camp ministry
- YOU to come and see camp and worship with us

*Camp has truly lived up to its call to Impact Every Life For Christ!*





### Kurt & Kendra Lindberg – Family Campers

Our family has been attending Family Camp 1 for the past twenty years - our three kids wouldn't let us miss it! During

one of those weeks, Tim Atkins taught about how the goodness of God is a "pleasing aroma" to all of those around us (2 Corinthians 2:14-15). He challenged us to consider- "How do you smell?"

I think we would all agree that there is a distinctive "camp smell." It is probably a combination of lake water, camp fire, and the old chapel. Sometimes I find myself around west Michigan where we live and I will suddenly stop and grab my wife's arm and say "Omigosh.... this place smells like CAMP." My father grew up going to youth camps at Portage Lake during the first years that camp was established. He remembers my grandmother throwing him in the bathtub as soon as he arrived home. One of the years that I was on staff, Kirk Mortenson had the brilliant idea of a "camper wash" at the end of every Trailblazer week. Evidently, the "camp smell" wasn't always a pleasant one. However it is more than just physical. The joy, love, and acceptance that we are immersed in while at camp becomes a way of life that can emit a pleasing aroma that others take note of. For example, a young man that my kids befriended while we were vacationing in Massachusetts asked, "Can anyone go to that camp?" Less than a year later he was giving his

testimony at the end of a week at Senior High Camp. He then proceeded to work on SWIM team for the rest of the summer. We are praying that the "camp smell" will be evident to those around him during the coming year.

May we too, as the campers and staff of PLCBC continue to be the pleasing aroma of God's love wherever we find ourselves during the cold months of the off-season (although camp no longer really has an "off" season). Maybe Dave can figure out a way to make those refrigerator magnets "scratch and sniff."



# CAMP IS GROWING!

## Portage Lake has grown in many ways over the years.

Each addition to camp has been dedicated to serving and proclaiming Christ in our community, our churches and the world. Look at what has been happening:

- New lakeside fire pits
- Jerry Umanos Mountain Bike Program
- New 15-passenger van for trips
- Renovated Cool Beans Coffee Shop
- Almost \$40,000 in scholarships given
- Siding on Retreat Center
- Upgraded Chapel sound system
- Lakeside Lodge – housing 40 more campers
- Resurfaced basketball courts
- New infirmary and added housing with restrooms

Over the past 15 years we have put almost 3.5 million dollars' worth of improvements into the camp. This sets camp up to be a place of retreat, worship, and enjoyment for decades to come.



# testimonies

## Justin & Melissa Saxton

It all began 13 years ago – as a youth pastor bringing groups of students up for weekend retreats. Over the years, PLCBC has become a treasured place for my own family. It's been formational in my family's faith journey, refreshing and encouraging us for life in our church, neighborhood, schools, and community.



We have had numerous opportunities to experience PLCBC as leaders, campers and now parents of campers at Junior High & High School Retreats, Sleighbell Family Weekends, Pathfinders, Trailblazers, Breathe Retreats, Women's Retreats, Men's Retreats, Family Camp and one of our favorites, Work & Worship. Our family truly loves PLCBC and are grateful for the impact that it has had for so many people we know.

We can't think of a better investment for our individual growth, our marriage, our family, and our kids as they grow in their faith. Every time we are at camp we are encouraged, challenged and cared for. Our family agrees that PLCBC is a place where we can be ourselves, feel loved and encouraged, and walk away with something we can't help but share.

Throughout the years we have had the opportunity to share PLCBC with friends from our church and neighborhood. Once they arrive, God makes a huge impact through the people and experience. We have witnessed many first timers have their lives transformed and quickly think of PLCBC as "their camp."

Our kids often say (and we agree!) that PLCBC is the best place and has the best people in the world. Melissa and I met 20 years ago at a Covenant camp in California. Sixteen years of marriage and four kids later, we never would have imagined that Christian camping would continue to be central to our lives and spiritual development. Thank you PLCBC for investing in our family and our faith. We can't wait to bring more families to experience the same.

