

## The Report of Lutherlyn for calendar 2010

While I continue to be deeply concerned about our youth and our church and the future, 2010 was, with the help of God and many of you, a year of hope. As a result we dare to be excited about 2011. Thank God, and thank you.

2010 was an austere and challenging year at Lutherlyn. We ran short-staffed. We let some repairs slide. We negotiated lower rates for gas and electricity. We were obsessed with energy conservation. We asked you, individuals and congregations, for extra support. We reminded parents, pastors, and our youth, in every way we could think of, about the benefits accrued in a week at Lutherlyn. We did not, however, compromise on the quality of our staff, our programming, or our ministry. We had an excellent summer, a strong Second Season and lots of retreats.

The result was a very good year that ended solidly in the black and got us some breathing room. Individuals and congregations *did* respond with strong support. We saw our first real increase in summer camper attendance since 2001. There were 29 more campers in week-long programs and 100 more in day camps. Beyond that, individuals responded generously to our mini-campaign to replace all the mattresses in camp for summer 2011. Make no mistake, we are not “out of the woods,” at this point and to move forward we need your continuing support, partnership, and efforts to motivate the young people within your reach to come to camp (in the woods)!

Thanks to the many who responded generously, all of our old foam mattresses will be replaced with new dormitory-style, inner-spring mattresses in time for summer 2011! Thanks to a generous couple, there will also be two new “challenge facilities” in place by summer of 2011. First, a new high-ropes course with almost a dozen elements including a new zip-line that we expect to be around 1,000 feet long. Secondly, a “bouldering room” – an indoor, heated climbing space – for year-around use is being developed in Derr Hall, the “Ed Building!” We are now able to move on to make those repairs we let slide last year and have hired some new part-time staff to share the load. These improvements will make life at camp more comfortable, more adventuresome, and more fun!

Something else that is fueling hope is that many people in the Southwest Synod, under the umbrella of the Synod Youth Committee, are collaborating as the “SWPA Youth Summit Group” to renew youth ministry in all of its expressions and opportunities, beginning with the Lutheran Youth Organization. A good deal of the energy firing these folks stems from the recognition that a church that “loses” its youth simply has no future. The intention of those who are developing such new initiatives as the LYO’s Sunday Night Live, “SNL” events, is to work toward models that take into account what we are learning from the Emerging Church movement. This new vitality is attracting and engaging a growing percentage of our youth, even as their numbers decline. Lutherlyn has been a fully engaged partner in this work as we are pitching in to realize the vision of SWPA synod youth ministry: “To engage youth in a life-long committed relationship with Christ and the Church.”

What this means for Lutherlyn is that we have stepped out of the box in some ways to explore new collaborations with others doing ministry with “our” kids. Camp is one of the players in this mix which is now working together with LYO, Youth Convo, SpiritFest, YouthFest, Mission on the Mon, Sunday Night Live, and others for collaborative and coordinated planning that is strengthening the efforts of each of the participating ministries and enabling us to do far more than we were able to do individually before. Every event benefits from the cross-fertilization. Every event promotes the other efforts of the synod’s youth ministry mix. A recurring event such as SNL becomes possible because many people share the workload. Every event raises the synod’s collective awareness of youth ministry opportunities, youth ministry is strengthened, our youth are strengthened, and our church is strengthened. Conversation about this initiative, which may or may not be appropriate their context, has been opened with youth leadership in the Northwestern Synod.

Lutherlyn's unique contribution to the mix is time apart. Here campers have a week of living, playing, working, praying, learning, questioning, exploring, pushing their limits, getting along, and talking face to face – "face time" rather than "facebook" time – and getting to know each other more deeply than happens in short events. Camp is experiential and practical in that "the Gospel is lived as well as taught." Leadership skills are developed. Durable friendships are built. Faith is wrestled with and "owned." Camp does kids good.

Congregations have a *huge* and *essential* role to play in ministry with our young people. Our kids need to belong to churches where pastors and adults who are not their parents welcome them, their gifts and their participation, listen to them, care about, respect, make an effort to understand, share stories with, mentor, provide role models for, and value them. Congregations need to make it easy for their youth to participate in all the youth ministry opportunities the church has to offer and that means making them aware of what is available, encouraging them to be involved, providing transportation as necessary, supporting their activities and involvement financially, and providing the adult leadership required to make all that happen. The kids in your congregation may be "yours," but all the kids in all the congregations are "ours" and we all made baptismal promises about what we would do to raise them in the faith. Let's all face the same direction on this and see how much good we can do for them.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Randal K Gullickson