

# Pathways Lutheran Outdoor Ministries

*"Providing unique environments where God encounters people and renews them to live lives of love"*



Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ! We hope you are well and getting through what is starting to feel like a pretty long winter. We wanted to spend a few moments sharing with you an exciting topic that is going to be part of our conversation at the Annual Meeting for Pathways on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022. For the last year (and for many years before that) we have been exploring a question raised by Trinity Lutheran Church about the future of Camp Emmaus. For clarity, we hope to offer here a brief history of our relationship with this beautiful Bible Camp and Trinity, many of the questions we as a board have been sorting through, and where our discussions have led up to this point. We are excited to continue this conversation and for a future resolution to this long discussed topic.

**What is the relationship of Pathways, Trinity Lutheran Church, and Camp Emmaus?** Many of you may not know this but Camp Emmaus is not owned by the Pathways Bible Camp Organization. It is formally owned by Trinity Lutheran Church of Moorhead, Minnesota and Pathways has facilitated all camping ministries at the site since 1978. In 1978 Trinity set up an ad hoc committee to study the status of Camp Emmaus. They determined that they were not prepared to engage in their own camping ministry at that time. A series of short-term leases were agreed from 1978-1985 with fees ranging from \$10,000 - \$13,000 annually. In 1985 Pathways raised \$250,000 to build a new dining hall. Upon completion of the dining hall, Trinity agreed to lease Camp Emmaus to Pathways for \$1 per year for 24 years. Pathways paid all expenses including insurance, maintenance and capital improvements. Again in 1999 Pathways and Trinity worked together to complete the Adult Retreat Center in the basement of the dining hall. Pathways raised \$130,000 towards the total of \$250,000 for the Adult Retreat Center. Since then a series of \$1 per year lease renewals have been agreed annually with Pathways required to spend \$10,000 per year on capital improvements at Camp Emmaus. Some of those capital improvements over the past few years are improvements to the girls bath house, updates to the staff building and new maintenance garage. Significant capital investment is required at Camp Emmaus.

During this time, Trinity remained a strong partner in this ministry through regular financial contributions, both from the Trinity congregation and the Trinity Foundation, and through the large number of Trinity youth participating in the camping ministry at Emmaus each year.

Thousands of young lives have been positively impacted through the camping programs of Trinity Lutheran Church and Pathways Lutheran Outdoor Ministries at Camp Emmaus. It is our hope that Camp Emmaus remains a ministry site for many years to come.

**Where do we do our ministry right now?** For many years Pathways facilitated ministry at three individual sites, only one of which, Camp Minne-Wa-Kan, that we formally owned as an Organization. Over time campership numbers declined and we had to consolidate to two camps. In 2004 we consolidated to one camp, be that Camp Emmaus and began a lease agreement with Concordia Language Villages for the use of Camp Minne-Wa-Kan. This has been a great partnership and resulted both in financial income for Pathways as well as property and building investments into Camp Minne-Wa-Kan by Concordia. In truth, we have done almost all ministry through Camp Emmaus for the last 20 years with only a few retreats during the off season being held at Camp Minne-Wa-Kan.



**What are the demographics of Campership right now?** Let's look at this by percentages of students attending camp from individual conferences in our Synod. These are the numbers for last summer: Northern Border Conference: 2%, Thief River Falls Conference: 8%, Crookston Conference: 16%, Bemidji Conference: 11%, Moorhead Conference: 43%, Detroit Lakes Conference: 10%, Fergus Falls Conference: 1%, and 9% come from outside of the NWMN Synod. Seeing that 43% of our campership numbers come the Moorhead Conference alone has led us to a challenging question: if Pathways no longer had ministries at Camp Emmaus, could we make the move to Camp Minne-Wa-Kan and survive as a Ministry Organization?

**Can Pathways continue ministry at two sites in the future?** This question has come up multiple times over the last 20+ years. We perhaps can, but it will be challenging. Our relationship with Concordia has allowed us to keep two sites to this point and move forward in a positive way. While we don't have clear answers to this question yet, it is still before us and will need to be answered by 2025 when our contract is up for renewal.

**Why is it important to make a decision on ownership now?** In truth, this has been a question for resolution in every strategic plan we have had for over 25 years. It is coming to a resolution now because Trinity is deciding whether or not to formally make a sale on some of their property assets as they plan for their future in ministry. It is very exciting to be coming to a resolution on this question of ownership and this will play a significant role in the future of Pathways Ministry moving forward. The challenge is we can't wait. If we don't move forward with a purchase of this property, Trinity may sell the camp to another party interested in using the camp for other purposes. Our only option would then be to move to Camp Minne-Wa-Kan which is a beautiful ministry site, but currently under contract with Concordia until 2025. Without Camp Emmaus, our choice would be to halt on-site camping ministry until 2025 or break our commitment to Concordia which doesn't really do well to honor their work and our relationship with another ELCA Ministry.

**What does Camp Emmaus as a property have to offer?** Camp Emmaus sits on 347 acres of property including both the entirety of a private lake and many acres of shore line for a commercial lake. Most of the acreage is forest land with trails. The camp itself sits on the private Lake Morgan and includes a high and low ropes course, a series of un-winterized camper cabins, chapel, and other smaller buildings, a winterized staff building, retreat center and dining hall, as well as a new maintenance garage. One of the big dreams is to rebuild all the camper cabins into year around cabins with bathrooms and showers in them. This is just one of many exciting hopes for this ministry site.

**Does the Pathways Board of Directors support the purchase of Camp Emmaus?** In the spring of 2021 Trinity was approached by an interested buyer and began exploring the property at Camp Emmaus to determine an estimated market value. Several rounds of conversation, discussion and negotiation took place between Pathway's and Trinity's negotiating teams. After the many meetings and much discussion and faithful discernments, an agreed upon proposal was brought to both the Pathways Board and Trinity Council. (For clarity, both the Trinity Council and Pathways Board were involved throughout the process and commissioned negotiating teams to meet between board and council sessions to discuss details and proposals.) The agreed upon final proposal was brought to the Pathways Board of Directors on August 31, 2021 for discussion and motion which read:

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*Pathways purchases parcels 1-4 for \$200,000 and Pathways makes a \$500,000 pledge to Trinity's capital campaign to be fulfilled by December 31, 2026. As part of our pledge, Pathways will sign a Covenant of Commitment that states "We commit to fulfilling a \$500,000 pledge to support Trinity's Ministry through its Capital Campaign to be completed within 5 years of the point of sale. If Pathways does not fulfill this pledge, we commit in good faith to deeding the Bible Camp back to Trinity. Pathways does retain full rights over the decisions of Camp Emmaus' future from the point of sale."*

Our formal vote as a Pathways Board was 10 to Approve with 2 Against the proposed motion. In response to this vote the Trinity Council voted 11 to Approve with 1 Against which meant they would be proceeding with Pathways purchasing the property over other bidders. Both approvals are contingent on our constituencies discussing and formally motioning to make a sale/purchase of Camp Emmaus final. So, in answer to this question, the Pathways board of directors are in support of the purchase of Camp Emmaus at this negotiated price point. We believe this is an exciting move for Pathways as a ministry organization, opening up huge doors for the future of Pathways, while honoring the relationship we have had with Trinity and their ministry moving forward. It will take all of us to rally together to make this happen, but we are confident that we can raise the money needed and move forward in a faithful way, sharing Jesus with kids and families following the light of our savior together.

**What is next for this whole conversation?** We are so excited to explore this question together and to do that, we need you. We urgently request your attendance at the *Pathways Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 3pm either in person at Camp Emmaus or on Zoom.* This is a defining moment in camping ministry in northwestern Minnesota. The next formal step is for Trinity's Congregation to discuss and approve this potential sale of Camp Emmaus which will come in April or May. For us here at Pathways, we will engage in conversation about the future of our relationship with Camp Emmaus and the merits of Pathways possibly purchasing Camp Emmaus from Trinity. After Trinity's congregational meeting, we will gather again on Zoom to discuss and bring to the table to formal sale/purchase motion approved by them. Please read through this whole document again, reach out with question before our annual meeting, and come prepared to explore the wonderful future God has in store for Pathways Bible Camps!

More information and the Annual Meeting Zoom link can be found at [www.PathwaysBibleCamps.org](http://www.PathwaysBibleCamps.org). Take care and may God bless you as we continue to walk this road together.

Chris Andreasen

Executive Director of Pathways Bible Camps

Pr. Chris Leach

Chair of the Pathways Board of Directors