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## Congregational Report 2023

**Thank you for being a Partner Congregation!** We are grateful and inspired by the work and support of so many congregations who've continued to partner with camp so that thousands of people each year can experience fellowship in community and come to know Jesus at Camp Wapo, Ox Lake, and Wilderness Canoe Base. We are grateful for a year filled with campers and retreat guests, for our donors, prayer warriors, and YOU - our partner congregations.

**Summer 2023** This summer we welcomed nearly 4000 campers and families to Camp Wapo, Ox Lake and Wilderness Canoe Base, including 90 guided canoe trips into the BWCAW. This year's summer staff was excellent. They were required to be flexible, resilient, and filled some important leadership roles. They rose to that challenge full of energy, grace and servant hearts. We are always looking for young adults to work at camp so if you know someone who would be perfect, please send them our way! It's the perfect resume builder for any future career path.

**Strategic Plan Initiative** We continue to work on Strategic Initiative focusing on three main Strategic areas: Identity, Inclusivity, and Generosity/Engagement. In 2023, a task force of talented theologians and pastors created a theology framework document that will serve as guardrails for the good of our campers/guests and overall ministry. The Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion (DEAI) committee has been created and secured funding for a DEAI assessment to happen in 2024. A development audit has been completed highlighting strengths and areas of growth. We continue the work on comprehensive site plans that will help us provide meaningful and transformative outdoor ministry experiences for all.

**Welcome!** At Wilderness Canoe Base we welcomed **Stephanie Carpenter**, Wilderness Canoe Base Director, **Megan Meyer**, Food & Hospitality, Spencer Garness, Property, and Sarah Garness, Office. Their previous WCB experience and a deep love and understanding for the ministry has resulted in a seamless leadership transition.

At Wapo we welcomed **Eric Golberg**, Director of Administration, **Mari Shumaker**, Wapo Program Director, **Joe Mara**, Maintenance, and **Nick Meziere**, Hospitality and Guest Services. Starting January 1, 2024 **Joel Abenth** will begin serving as the Director of Donor Engagement. With his vast experience working with donors and outdoor ministry, he is ready to work with congregations, individuals and families who wish to support camp in all sorts of ways. Please reach out to him if you want to learn more about opportunities to support camp ([joela@campwapo.org](mailto:joela@campwapo.org)).

**Retreats and Events in 2023** Retreats at Wapo and Wilderness are definitely building back to capacity. Reach out to Ryan ([ryanb@campwapo.org](mailto:ryanb@campwapo.org)) to schedule your retreat at Wapo or Wilderness. We celebrated 75 years of ministry at Camp Wapo on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> with a bluegrass worship and celebration lunch. We welcomed over 400 people for our Memorial Day Pancake Extravaganza. We had our 21<sup>st</sup> year of the Wapo Golf Tournament, and hosted over 1200 guests and volunteers in Advent with 8 performances of the 34<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Dinner Theater "For the Love of Christmas Lefse".

**Mission Support Fund** This year we had 2 matching gift challenges to inspire new donors. One generous friend of camp offered a \$50,000 summer giving challenge and Wilderness Canoe Base received a \$20,000 gift match for GiveMN's Give to the Max day. Our donors rose to the challenge, responding with \$70,000 in gifts. Overall, we also had a tremendous response to our Mission Support Fund appeal to support operating and camper scholarships, raising well over \$500,000. Every gift has a life changing impact on thousands of lives each year.

**Our theme for 2024 is "Always"** Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" and 1Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances." In a world marked by constant change, this theme serves as a powerful reminder of the unchanging nature of God's love. With our campers, we will discover how to live out this promise in a camp experience and at home.

We look ahead with eager anticipation and a sure sense of hope. See you at camp in 2024!