



As I looked at these bright-eyed hopeful disciples, an awful question loomed in my head:

What if Casowasco and our other camp and retreat sites NEVER opened again?

What if these historic disciple-making ministries fell forever – victims of COVID-19?

These are scary questions and we have a role in answering them. Through wars and recessions, in good times and bad, pastors like us have done what is necessary to offer Christ to children, youth and adults through this sacred ground. The challenge before us today is to do all that we can to ensure that our camp and retreat

ministry sites not only survive but are able to thrive into the future.

Would you take some time today to pray and send whatever gift you can to help us keep our camp and retreats sites and ministries alive?

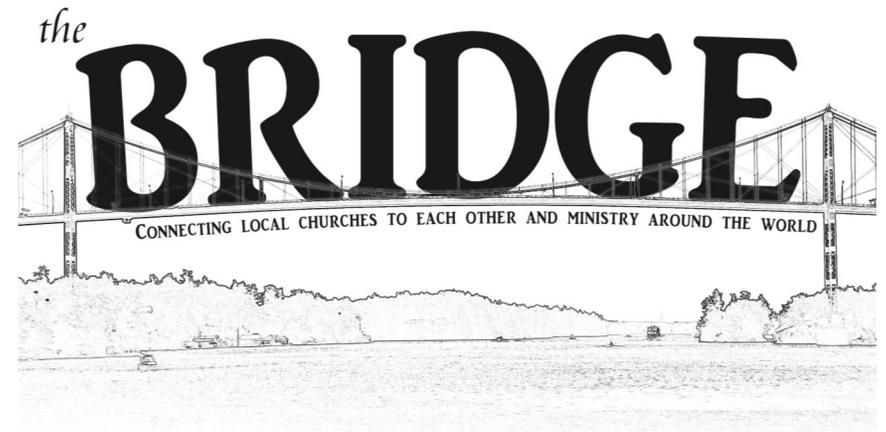
You can designate your gift to a site or Camp and Retreat Ministries: <https://campsandretreats.org/donate/>. You can also mail your support to Camp & Retreat Ministries, 7481 Henry Clay Blvd, Liverpool, NY 13088.

Together, we can weather this storm and stand again on this sacred ground when the COVID-19 storms pass.

*The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:*

**[www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)**

Find Information and resources about how to improve your church's digital discipleship at <https://www.unyumc.org/about/digital-discipleship>



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

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# Why the Manna in the Wilderness Campaign is important

**By the Rev. Sherri Rood**

As you may know, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced Aldersgate, Asbury, Casowasco, Sky Lake, and Skye Farm to cancel an entire summer camp season as well as numerous church, family, and group retreats and gatherings. In addition to the loss of these life-changing ministry opportunities, these cancellations have resulted in over a million dollars in lost revenue. Though each site has begun to reopen, the pandemic will continue to limit what is possible for many months to come.

These precious ministries have entered a “wilderness time” of uncertainty and scarcity. In response to this challenge, our Conference is making an emergency financial appeal, what we are calling the Manna in the Wilderness Campaign, to support our camp and retreat ministries in these unprecedented times.

I am asking that you join me and many others across the Upper New York Conference in supporting these ministries by making a financial gift to the campaign.

I remember the first time I went to camp. On my own, making new friends and enjoying the beauty of creation, I

felt connected to God in a new, deeper way.

One of my first counselors, Joyce, showed me how to read the Bible with fresh eyes and see the love of Jesus all around me. I learned songs that I remember to this day; yes, some of them were silly, but many have sustained me in times of doubt or sadness and have given me a way to praise God with heart and soul.

One night, standing out in a field, I was amazed at the beauty of the stars. Growing up in the suburbs, I had never seen the Milky Way before. I remember feeling very small, but also enveloped in God’s love as I thought of the words of the psalmist,

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?”

**Psalms 8:3-4 NRSV**

Years later, I explored my calling to ordained pastoral ministry at one of our retreat centers. I have taught Lay Servant courses and led retreats at our camp and retreat sites, encouraging people to deepen their faith as they see the love of



Jesus all around them.

All of this was possible because we had camps and retreat centers where we could gather, reflect, pray, learn, and grow.

If you would like to join me in supporting these ministries, you can designate your gift to a site or Camp and Retreat Ministries: <https://campsandretreats.org/donate/>. You can also mail your support to Camp & Retreat Ministries, 7481 Henry Clay Blvd, Liverpool, NY, 13088.

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# Why I am supporting the Manna in the Wilderness Campaign

**By the Rev. Bill Mudge**

I too am supporting the Manna in the Wilderness Campaign, to help our camp and retreat ministries in these unprecedented times.

I was moved by a recent conversation which drove home the value of our camp

and retreat ministries for others, particularly youth and young adults.

The two saints I spoke with are high school students who faithfully attend the Baldwinsville First United Methodist Church. They not only attend worship and were baptized and confirmed here, but there are MANY ministries of the

BFUMC that could not be done well without these disciples.

As we talked about the challenges of living through this time of pandemic, I guided our conversation towards camp and retreat ministries and Casowasco in particular, knowing how much these two young people love this ministry. They

acknowledged that among all the losses of this crazy time, the one they felt most acutely was their lost time at Casowasco this summer. They have both been faithful in attendance there for almost 10 years!

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