

On the cover: The shadow of the cross at the end of the Don Lee pier, by Sarah Nickens, Camp Staff

Lent presents itself as a natural and necessary season for focus and regrouping. This season can be a great time of personal renewal for anyone, wherever they may be in their personal faith walk with God.

This journal invites you to partner with Camp Don Lee on a daily journey through Lent with 40 personal devotions and stories of faith contributed by current and former campers, camp staff, pastors, and dear friends to the mission of Camp Don Lee. Each writer shares the desire to help spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and that of Camp Don Lee.

Lenten Prayer Partners 2008

A DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

DON LEE CENTER

As a Don Lee Lenten Prayer Partner, it is our hope that you will pray each day during Lent and include a special focus in your prayer for the ministry of God at Don Lee Center. Your time of prayer should focus on the lives of children, youth and families who will be enriched, lifted up and changed this year because of the time they are able to spend at Don Lee.

Let us know you are praying! Call 1-800-535-5475 ext. 23 and saying "I am committed to pray with you and others each day during Lent." Or send an email to john@donleecenter.org and let him know you have joined the community of prayer partners for 2008. Or just pray – we will get the message.

It is also asked that as you are blessed by the genuine and heartfelt passages of the volunteer writers, you consider making a daily offering of \$1 for each day of Lent. Your gift will directly support the continuing ministries and future vision of Don Lee for generations to come.

In your own envelope, you may send a gift to help support the work of Camp Don Lee. Please make checks payable to: **Don Lee Center**

Please send your tax-deductible gift to: Don Lee Center
315 Camp Don Lee Road
Arapahoe, NC 28510

or simply visit www.donleecenter.org to make an online donation by credit card.

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Blessings

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

DON LEE CENTER

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315 Camp Don Lee Road • Arapahoe, NC 28510 • 1-800-535-5475 • www.donleecenter.org

Greetings Friends

LENTEN PRAYER PARTNERS 2008

DON LEE CENTER

At a local committee meeting in the dining hall of Camp Don Lee in the fall of 2002, John Farmer shared a vision he had for a very special project. His dream was to invite individuals and churches to become partners during the season of Lent to grow in their relationship with God, take time daily for prayer and study, and to specifically pray for the ministry of Don Lee Center. On Ash Wednesday of 2003, over 500 prayer partners read the first devotion of what lives today as Lenten Prayer Partners, an annual project of The Company of Friends of Don Lee.

The Company of Friends invites you to partner with us again this Lenten season. The theme for 2008 is "Blessings." As you study the scriptures and read these devotions, it is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will move you to pray daily for the ministry of Camp Don Lee and consider making a Lenten offering of \$1 per day for 40 days to help support its mission and vision.

*Phyllis Whitley Williams – Chairperson, The Company of Friends of Don Lee Inc.
Camper and Counselor, Mother of Staff Member, Local Camp Committee*

Amazed, humbled, blessed – these words describe how I feel to be associated with all that is Camp Don Lee, or Don Lee Center. Having the privilege of previewing these devotions while assembling this year's Lenten Prayer Partner Journal, I can tell you, more positively and enthusiastically than ever, that Don Lee is a place where the Holy Spirit is hard at work, drawing us closer to the Savior we all share, building friendships, strengthening faith and making the world a better place, one camper at a time.

Camp Don Lee has a story to tell, a love story written over the last 60 years by thousands of folks young and old who have strolled through the tall pines, canoed down winding Gatlin Creek, sailed on the beautiful Neuse River, worshiped at its shore, and been a witness to life-changing events at "a place that God has blessed."

These devotional "chapters" are written by current and former campers, camp staff, pastors, and dear friends to the mission of Camp Don Lee. Each writer shares the desire to help spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and that of Camp Don Lee.

Thank you in advance for not only reflecting on these stories of God's people, but also helping to support and expand the Don Lee legacy of spreading God's love, His mercy – and His story.

*Brad Griffin – Editor of Lenten Prayer Partners Journal 2008
Camper, Father of Campers 2002-2007, Local Camp Committee*

The History of Lent

From *The Season of Lent*, by Dennis Bratcher

"Originating in the fourth century of the church, the season of Lent spans 40 weekdays beginning on Ash Wednesday and climaxing during Holy Week with Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday), Good Friday, and concluding Saturday before Easter. Originally, Lent was the time of preparation for those who were to be baptized, a time of concentrated study and prayer before their baptism at the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord early on Easter Sunday. But since these new members were to be received into a living community of Faith, the entire community was called to preparation.

Today, Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent, and are referred to as the Sundays in Lent. The number 40 is connected with many biblical events, but especially with the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead Him to abandon His mission and calling. Christians today use this period of time for introspection, self-examination, and repentance.

It is really a preparation to celebrate God's marvelous redemption at Easter, and the resurrected life that we live, and hope for, as Christians."

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☐ *Wednesday, February 6*

ASH WEDNESDAY

1ST DAY OF LENT

46 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Romans 8:31-34 *What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?*

Speaking of blessings! It is certainly most important to remember in this time of the year, as we acknowledge our human failings with images of sackcloth and ashes, that we do so in proper context. Sin, failings, and death – while very real – do not have the final word. For those of us in Christ, we know that it is God who has spoken with the greatest of authority. It is, in fact, the Word who has the final word. God sent His own Son (the Living Word) into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Lent is a time to honestly reflect upon our lives and upon our relationship with God. As Christians, it is truly a time for us to recognize where we are in our spiritual walk. It is indeed a time for confession and repentance. Yet, as we confess and repent and seek to be closer to God, may we never forget that it is because of Jesus that we have been justified (and not condemned). And it is because of Jesus that we are heirs with Him to His immeasurable riches! It is the Living Water of Christ that cleanses away the ashes! What now should we say to this?! †

Joe Stallings

Camp Staff 1979-1983, Father of Camper, Local Camp Committee

☐ *Thursday, February 7*

2ND DAY OF LENT

45 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

James 2:17 *Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

Serving a week each summer as “Camp Nurse” has been a joy of mine for several years. I get to spend a week as close to heaven as it gets down here. Surrounded by God’s glorious handiwork in nature and His grace working in the staff and campers, I enjoy an experience unmatched elsewhere. Every week I am overwhelmed with the obvious needs for love, attention and acceptance. Every week I am overwhelmed with the gracious abundance of love, attention and acceptance that everyone gives and receives.

The most humbling time for me was when I was not the witness, but the recipient. Just after

checking in the last mid-week camper, I was aware of an odd feeling. Let me say, I am never sick, never miss a day from work, so this feeling was so weird I didn’t know what was wrong. Quickly, I figured it out – I, the nurse, was sick. Very sick, sicker than I had ever remembered. I’ll spare you the details.

The staff of camp ministered to me. One young man who had medical training came in to check on me and then took over my duties that evening. Several more stopped by to see if I needed anything. One came by before breakfast the next day and brought me juice and a bagel. Another came and sat by the bed to talk. The next day more of the staff offered their support one way or another. The love, attention and acceptance that I had seen demonstrated was being directed toward me. It was a humbling blessing.

These kids live their faith. They showed me a love and grace that demonstrated a faith made alive. †

Dianne Bruton

Camp Nurse, Local Camp Committee

☐ *Friday, February 8*

3RD DAY OF LENT

44 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

John 3:3 *Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

“Bull frogs and butterflies have both been born again.” Now, there’s that corny little chorus that my dear brother and friend Rueggy Copen used to lead at Camp Don Lee. Yeah, it really is corny, but it does speak of the reality of God’s work.

When I think of Lenten season, I am reminded of our potential for godly transformation. Sure, we’re sinners. But, we’re sinners with a Savior, Jesus Christ; we’re sinners with a Sanctifier, the Spirit of God. Through our faith in Christ, we are not only saved by grace from our sin, we are also reborn into new creations through the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit. So... as corny as it seems, like the bull frogs and butterflies, we too become born again. That is, set free from the chains of sin that hold us; and set free to be the kind of people God calls us to be. During this season, as we take an honest look at who we are, don’t forget that we are who we are in Christ. That makes all the difference. †

In Honor of Rueggy Copen

Camp Staff 1978-1982

☐ Saturday, February 9

4TH DAY OF LENT

43 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 121:7 *The Lord will keep you from all harm; He will watch over your life.*

Having two teenage daughters is a blessing that comes with daily challenges. There was a time when I worried about everything either of my girls was doing. Whether it was who their friends were or who they were crushing on at the time; I worried. I worried about their grades. I worried about their choices; I just flat out worried. Then early one morning I was sitting at the desk of my youngest daughter and she had her Bible open to Psalm 121. I read the entire Psalm and when I got to verse 7, which read “The Lord will keep you from all harm; He will watch over your life,” I just felt so incredibly peaceful.

I didn’t for even a minute think that meant bad things would never happen to either of my girls; but I found comfort in being reminded that they have the greatest friend in the world in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He will not leave them. He will not hurt them. He will always stand beside them and carry them through the tough times. I felt so blessed that morning, not only because of my amazing girls who have brought so much love and energy into my life; but because I have a church family which has served as a strong foundation for them as their faith had grown and matured over the years. That day, I quit worrying. I decided our Heavenly Father would rather me have a little faith and spend the time enjoying the two daughters He had blessed my life with all those years ago. ✝

*Kim Smith
Mother of Camper*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10—1ST SUNDAY IN LENT

☐ Monday, February 11

5TH DAY OF LENT

41 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 1:3 *And He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. . .*

As long as I can remember there has been a cypress tree in my world. The neighborhood where I grew up is named “Cypress Shores.” As a young girl, I learned how to navigate my little skiff to avoid the cypress trees protruding from the muddy bottom of the creek. Some days I putt-putted down the creek to visit my friends. On other days I’d paddle up the creek to

where I could no longer navigate. It was there where I was surrounded by cypress trees. That was my quiet, peaceful retreat from the world.

At Vesper Dale at Camp Don Lee there is a cypress tree. That tree has been a blessing to me throughout my life. As a camper I sat under that tree and listened to stories and received inspiration and direction for my life. As a youth and then as a young adult, I found myself under that tree many times. I’ve cried, laughed, played, worshipped, and grown up under that tree. I have pictures of family campers year after year, at vespers under that tree. The children have grown taller, the adults have grown grayer, and we all are better people because of the times we’ve shared, under that tree. My son has grown up under that tree. I can see the 3-year old Jackson running around on the stage of Vesper Dale under that tree. Today I thank God for the Christian young man he has become and I know his life has been shaped by events and relationships that have made meaningful, lasting marks on his life as a camper and L.I.T.¹ under that tree. I’m certainly not alone in my appreciation of and respect for that tree. Countless others have sought its shade, its solace, its inspiration. People choose to come to that place, under that tree, to be married, to have their babies baptized; we return to this place that God has blessed, under that cypress tree.

The cypress symbolizes an understanding of the role of sacrifice. “The tree is a traditional Christian symbol for the cross – itself the central symbol of Christianity, representing suffering and death, as well as peace and life. Through Christ, Christians obtain ‘peace through the blood of His cross’ (Colossians 1:20); and yet the cross is ‘the offense’ which cannot be ‘removed’ (Galatians 5:11) from the only path leading to the highest life available to man. The cross, or tree, is that point at which one must either risk everything, or settle for far less than one had hoped” (Quote from Robert Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*).

Blessings from God via His disciples at Camp Don Lee have led many to Christ. We aspire to that higher calling, and have chosen that path of Christian servanthood, inspired by the lessons we’ve learned under that cypress tree.

I realize that trees can’t last forever, especially ones with their roots at a river shore that is ever-changing. I know that one day the tree will go, but I also know that its spiritual roots run deeper than its physical ones, and that those will never be lost. They will be perpetuated as we share this place that God has blessed with our children, and their children, and generations of God’s children yet to come. Camp Don Lee will always be a place that God has blessed and the world is a better place because of stories told, lessons learned, and love shared under that tree. ✝

*Jeneal Whorton Bunn
Camper, Camp Staff 1978-1980, Family Camper, Mother of Camper*

¹ Leadership In Training

☐ Tuesday, February 12

6TH DAY OF LENT

40 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 8:3-4 *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?*

The moon and stars shine particularly bright along the shores of the Neuse River. Perhaps this is one of the many reasons God's presence is felt so strongly by all of those who visit Camp Don Lee. Sitting on the pier late at night and simply gazing up, it is easy to feel safe in the knowledge that we certainly have a powerful God. When the dawn breaks and the winds begin to blow, God's power can truly be seen and felt. There is nothing like flying across the river in a sailboat to realize how small and helpless we truly are in this world. It is a humbling experience to know that God cares for me and protects me with a power that is limitless. All that is required of me is to share my needs with God and have faith to believe He will provide.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the display of power you show us. Thank you for strong winds and fierce storms; and seeing us safely through them. Help each of us to develop a faith that is equally as powerful, one that will be ready to stand by the shores of the Red Sea and wait for the waters to part. Amen. ✝

Linda Browning
Camper 1971-1978, Sailing Staff 1979-1983

☐ Wednesday, February 13

7TH DAY OF LENT

39 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 78:3 *Stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us.*

Camp Perry has been a favorite outpost camp for Camp Don Lee for years. It is a spot of land on the Neuse River just across from Oriental. As a young camper, we would take the camp bus to the outpost and sleep in the old two story house that stood there overlooking the river. The house had many stories told about it over the years. There were ghost stories full of suspense and often centering around something in the attic. These stories made the stay at Camp Perry all the more exciting. We would always enjoy taking the hike into the small town of Oriental and have a soft drink at the general store while the locals added to the many stories of the Perry House.

As the years went by, the river got closer and closer to the house. Eventually, the house fell into the river and a cabin was built on the site. For many years as a camper, we would sail to Camp Perry. After a long sail from camp it was always a pretty sight to see. Again, through the years, the cabin fell prey to the river. At this point campers would stay in tents. As a staff member I carried many groups to Camp Perry and guided groups there from the river. I can still remember walking that dark path that led to a campground game room that was right at the entrance of Camp Perry. This experience was just another one of the memorable moments at Camp Don Lee. ✝

Keith Cannon
Camper, Family Camper, Camp Staff, Local Camp Committee

☐ Thursday, February 14

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

8TH DAY OF LENT

38 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Today is my daughter's nineteenth birthday. I am reminded that children are a blessing from God. Family lines, birthrights and the sorrow of barrenness are recurring themes throughout the Scriptures. I once had another parent tell me, "Everyone should have children so that they will learn how not to be selfish." Parenthood is definitely a lesson in unconditional love. Parenthood also brings about numerous heartaches as well. As my husband and I struggle with our daughter's desire to be an independent, self-reliant adult, I keep coming back to Jeremiah 29:11. The decisions that she makes are not always the ones that I think are the right ones. I have concerns about her safety and how those decisions will affect her future, for I know that my deepest desire is for her to have a happy and prosperous future filled with hope.

God has the same desire for us, His children. I'm sure that He grieves when we don't follow the path that He has for us. He grieves when we don't accept His free gift of salvation. He knows that the path we have chosen without Him is one without blessings and hope. In the same way, He rejoices when we do take the path that He has chosen for us. He rejoices when one person accepts Him as Lord and Savior. Even the angels rejoice in heaven! That path is filled with the abundance of blessings, immeasurable riches, eternal salvation, and hope! Praise be to God! ✝

Theadus Stallings
Mother of Camper

☐ Friday, February 15

9TH DAY OF LENT

37 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Ephesians 1:3 *Praise the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the spiritual blessings that Christ has brought us from heaven!*

We all face difficulties throughout our lives that test our faith. Sometimes these incredible challenges make it seem like God hasn't blessed us. But, it is during these times that we must rely the most upon God for comfort and consolation. In order to fully receive God's blessings, we are called by God to believe in Him even when life's difficulties spread doubt and unbelief over our being. I like to think of our problems as mountains that seem to block our way. Climbing them is the most difficult part, but once we reach the top of our mountain of doubt or our mountain of unbelief, we are able to see God from the mountaintop. There, God pours out His many blessings over us – blessings of love and blessings of compassion. Receiving these blessings allows us to believe in the face of the unbelievable. Our God is truly good! ✚

*Cassie Stallings
Camper*

☐ Saturday, February 16

10TH DAY OF LENT

36 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Colossians 3:14-15 *Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

Raised poor and emotionally abused, I was a bitter young adult. The only goal that drove me was to escape. I struggled through adolescence, and was at the time of my story, struggling to survive on my own. My anger led my days and my nights; my goal was to overcome my mother's control on me and to be anything but her likeness. I questioned the God that made me hurt so bad. I can't say that I didn't believe, but I only had the faith of a mustard seed. I only questioned Him because I saw the faith in people that had impacted my life previously.

In a quiet conversational prayer with God one lonely night, I asked Him what direction to aim in order to escape my doomed future. Note, I was half joking because I can't say that I had any thought of ever knowing or ever being led by God.

The next morning, I awoke in a cold house. I would bring in wood to build a fire, see the same people, go to the same job, pay the same bills, but something had changed. I felt wise that morning while I hauled water from the spring. I was so glad to have water. I looked forward to my bike ride to work. I was so grateful to have a job. I told my mother I loved her. God had come to me in my sleep and reminded me of all the blessings that were in my life that I just hadn't been seeing. My eyes were opened. The wisdom God gave me was not only of His love, but His reminder to have a thankful heart. I needed to stop complaining and count my blessings. My life is now blessed eternally!

"And He said to them, '...truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.'" Matthew 17:20 ✚

*Erin Knight
Mother-Child Camper*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17—2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

☐ Monday, February 18

11TH DAY OF LENT

34 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Mark 10:27 *Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."*

This is one of my favorite scriptures. It is so incredibly optimistic, and so simple to understand...yet so difficult to actually believe. When I struggle with certain issues in my own life, I would do well to remember this passage and take it to heart. However, it is much easier to remember this scripture in good times, when life is going in the direction I want it to, and plans are running smoothly. It is a message that I would like for my children to learn.

My wife and I say bedtime prayers with our children on a daily basis. At times, they too struggle with various issues and we routinely tell them that when times are tough they should ask God to help them. Regardless of what the problem is, no problems are too big or too small for God. It is interesting how easily they seem to believe that God really can do anything, yet I often find myself doubting more than I would like to admit.

I hope that during this time of Lent, I will remember how truly blessed I have been. I have a great marriage and healthy children, what more could I hope for? Still, when little issues arise that I think are too small to bother God with, I hope I will approach Him with – *cont'd on p. 12*

the same strong belief that my children have, believing that He is wanting me to engage Him in conversation, and that none of my problems are too small to discuss.

Camp Don Lee is certainly another blessing in my life. One for which I am consistently thankful. During this Lenten season, I hope that we will all make an effort to remember CDL with our prayers and our donations. I am hopeful that this “place that God has blessed” will one day have the same impact on my children’s lives that it has had on the previous members of the Glass family. †

Scott Glass
Camper, Counselor, Assistant Director, Local Camp Committee

□ Tuesday, February 19

12TH DAY OF LENT

33 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Matthew 18:20 *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

I can remember a particular sailing trip when I was an L.I.T. in 1990. Our group of eighteen confident teenagers was sailing Flying Scots, coming back from a three-day, all-expenses paid stay at Cape Lookout. The goal was to make it to Shady View, then on to Camp the next morning. We sailed the entire day, starting with little or no wind, sailing behind Shackelford Banks. At least our boat was not moving (it only took us about 15 minutes to figure out that our centerboard was lodged firmly in the sand). The only true option was to be towed to Adams Creek.

Unfortunately, we did not arrive by the time night fell. With the night came a thundering rain storm. The sailing group was made up of three Flying Scots with six L.I.T.s per boat. As the wind and rain kicked up, we held each others’ hands and said the Lord’s Prayer together. That brief prayer gave us all a sense of calmness to help make it through the night. As we made landfall at Shady View, we all piled into a tent and thanked God for guiding us to safety.

The bond of friendships made that summer are unique to Camp Don Lee. I am still in contact with three of the people that were on that boat. The blessings of friendships and times spent together will sustain me forever. †

Clif Ferrell
Camper 1980-1990, Counselor 1991, Sailing Staff 1992, L.I.T. Coordinator 1993, 1994

□ Wednesday, February 20

13TH DAY OF LENT

32 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Proverbs 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

My girls, Rebecca and Lauren, have been attending Camp Don Lee since they were puppies. Both of them were Tweekers, Mariners, L.I.T.s and staff. It seems that my wife Dianne has caught the bug too, and she now serves as Camp Nurse once a summer for a week. The Holy Spirit magnet has a strong pull!

When Dianne and I first moved to Rocky Mount, we wanted our girls to attend a camp somewhere because we had done the same growing up. We just considered it a fun summer activity in a Christian environment. Back then, we whined and complained about how expensive all the camps seemed to be. We looked around and by God’s grace we found a brochure and had friends who sent their children to Camp Don Lee on the banks of the Neuse near Arapahoe.

To make a long story short, our whining about camp expenses stopped very quickly as we saw our girls growing in their relationship with God and the summer friends they met there. It is a place where a child, young teen and even adult can go and feel accepted and loved no matter what their background or life is like elsewhere. As all children do, our girls had tough times and rocky relationships from time to time in Rocky Mount during the school year, but when May came around there was talk of going to camp! All the winter problems faded quickly as summer and Camp Don Lee grew closer!

Through the years we’ve seen our girls blossom and grow strong in their relationship with Jesus our Savior. I can attest to the fact that Camp Don Lee has had a major role in growing those seeds that were planted and watered by all the faithful, loving, godly, sincere fellow campers and staff (under John Farmer’s careful and guided leadership). Camp Don Lee teaches young folks good values that will last them a lifetime. They have to learn things on their own and sometimes through the school of hard knocks. We all know how important those life lessons can be. They give you a real education. The staff of Don Lee sometimes have to make decisions that are life and death. Both of my girls are just now telling me about some of the sailing trips and adventures that had potential for disaster, along with the decisions THEY had to make in overcoming adversities in these events. I guess they know how protective I am and know I might have been ready to remove them from that “dangerous camp” if they had told me earlier of such events. — *cont’d on p. 14*

I'm writing this the week before Christmas and right now, there is a lot of discussion about giving our children presents. Some of the best presents and best "investments" of money that we can give our children are things that always happen at camp: relationship, responsibility, failure, love, removal from comfort zones, fresh breezes, time apart and time outdoors with other young people. Providing environments like this for our children allows them to grow and transition into Christian adulthood. I will always have a special place in my heart for Don Lee and I am humbled by God's grace and blessing in drawing our family to a place that He hath blessed! ☩

Mark Bruton
Volunteer, Father of Campers/Staff

☐ Thursday, February 21

14TH DAY OF LENT

31 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 65:2 *O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come.*

1 Peter 3:12 *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer.*

We who have grown up in and around church take our faith for granted sometimes. We, who have been taught God's ways from childhood, sadly fail to appreciate the awesome wonder and power and grace of the Almighty God we serve. Many Methodists are surprised to learn that a large percentage of the children who attend Camp Don Lee are not Methodist; in fact, many campers come from unchurched backgrounds. When the counselors lead small groups in their nightly devotions, it may be the child's first encounter with prayer. One counselor shared this experience with me:

After devotions and lights out everyone settled down quickly and went to sleep – except one small boy who had sat silent during devotions. Something he heard had struck him deeply and kept him awake for a long time. The counselor recalls that late that night the boy appeared at his bedside. The counselor, used to being awakened by boys who either were in need of a trip to the bathhouse or who were suffering from a bout of homesickness, sat up and asked the boy what he needed. The boy said, "I was just thinking, when we were talking to God, did He really hear us?" "Yes," the counselor replied. "Wow, are you sure?" the boy countered. "Yes, I'm sure 'cause I talk to Him a lot." "Really? That is so cool. I didn't know you could talk to God, and He really heard it."

CDL is not just the most beautiful place in the world, or just a fun place to go. It is a field ripe for harvest, a very real mission field.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for hearing our prayers. Continue to bless the children and counselors at CDL and continue to let them know that you do hear and answer their prayers. Amen. ☩

Dianne Bruton
Camp Nurse, Local Camp Committee

☐ Friday, February 22

15TH DAY OF LENT

30 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Philippians 1:3 *I thank my God every time I remember you.*

Camp Don Lee – a favorite place of mine growing up. I looked forward each year to heading to that remote spot in Pamlico County, planning on seeing some old friends and meeting some new ones. Many memories come back to me. . .

- Getting my bunk made and settling in the cabin.
- Meeting all the girls and boys in my group.
- Heading to the COLD pool for the swimming test, the HIGH dive, and the buddy system.
- Eating great meals in the dining hall – those delicious rolls!
- Doing capers – (Oh, no, not the bathhouse again!)
- Singing the blessing before meals and lots of singing afterwards.
- Playing four-square.
- Having a quiet time of meditation alone before breakfast.
- Canoeing up and down the creek – and even to Shark's Tooth Point – and across the Neuse River (not a good idea!)
- Sailing lessons.
- Learning new songs on my guitar.
- Hiking to Camp Hardison and cooking camper's stew.
- Sailing on the "big" boats to Camp Perry, and another time – sailing the sunfish to the Inland Waterway, being towed to Morehead, and sailing/camping at Shackleford.
- Walking in the rain with flip flops and a raincoat.
- Sitting at the edge of the trees with the wind from the river caressing my face.
- Sharing with others in my group – thoughts and dreams.
- Vespers down by the river – such an awesome experience when you felt the very presence of God and you were filled with the wonders of His creation – river, wind, trees, stars – all embodied here in this camp – Camp Don Lee, a place where God became real to me. ☩

Gwendolyn Morris
Camper

☐ Saturday, February 23

16TH DAY OF LENT

29 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 51:10 *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

Today is December 26, the day after Christmas, and the hustle and bustle of the past few weeks has finally come to an end. However, amidst the get-togethers and family events, I was reminded of how powerful God can be in our lives, and how He often uses others to teach us a lesson.

I, like others, fall into the Christmas rush, buying last minute presents and wishing for a few moments of peace. And while my wife and I do attempt to teach our children of the true meaning and purpose of Christmas, I am often left feeling as though I could have done better. Yet Christmas was especially meaningful this year because of a simple statement made to me by my 4-year old boy, Sam.

Sam had been talking about the presents he was hoping to get for the past month, and was sure that Santa would bring the right presents, regardless of the fact that Sam was changing his wish list up until Christmas Eve. Christmas morning arrived, and I heard the thumping of his little feet on the floor as he ran into our room (along with his sister Katie) to wake us before running into the room with the presents. I knew he was excited, and pretty sure it was because he was going to get a lot, not for any honorable reasons. He then crawled up into the bed with me and exclaimed, "I am so excited about Christmas! I cannot wait to give you guys the present I made for you."

After all the build up, and the extensive list for Santa and generous grandparents, Sam was genuinely most excited about giving us a gift he had made himself. It is true that he did not mind getting a few things, yet I believe nothing brought him more joy on Christmas than giving his mom and me the picture frame he had made at school.

God is good, and has blessed our family in many ways, and I am certain that Sam's comment on Christmas morning was God's gift to Bonnie and me, to help us put the crazy schedule behind us, and focus on all that God has given us. I would do well to remember his pure heart throughout the remainder of the year. ✚

Scott Glass

Camper, Counselor, Assistant Director, Local Camp Committee

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24—3RD SUNDAY IN LENT

☐ Monday, February 25

17TH DAY OF LENT

27 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Matthew 19:14 *But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."*

In early November we had a field trip to Camp Don Lee. I loved every single station, but there were two stations that I liked the most. The first was the campfire. At the end, all the groups gathered together to sing songs and eat s'mores around the campfire. The leader was playing the guitar and we sang a song called "Fungus" and another named "Algae". Both of the songs were really weird, but very funny. My friend and I got up and danced. At the end, my friend and I did splits in the sand.

My second favorite station is the Herpetology. We all got to touch big and little turtles. They felt really wet and smooth. At the end, the leader brought out a big, huge snake. Some people touched it. I got to hold the snake and it licked my hair. It was a great trip to Don Lee. ✚

Micahia Akers

5th grade field trip, Vanceboro Farm Life Elementary

In early November, we went to Camp Don Lee. When we went I enjoyed everything, but I had one favorite activity. It was the Herpetology. We went in and sat on the floor. The leaders stood behind the table and in front of them were a lot of animals. When one of the leaders took out a snake, I went closer. We were allowed to hold it, but I just wanted to pet it. When I touched the snake it felt gooey and slimy. At the same time it was scary, but it was also amazing. I wish I could go back soon. It would be amazing if I did. Someday, I think I will. ✚

Rose Cronier

5th grade field trip, Vanceboro Farm Life Elementary

On November 16, 2007 our class went to Camp Don Lee. The station I liked the most was the Herpetology station. We held turtles and snakes. That was the first time I had touched a snake. I also liked the lunch. It was the best home cooked lunch I ever had. We had beans and chicken. The best part was the dessert. We had a really good time at Camp Don Lee and someday I hope to go back. ✚

Brieana

5th grade field trip, Vanceboro Farm Life Elementary – cont'd on p. 18

In November, we went to Camp Don Lee. We did a lot of activities, but there were a couple of them I really enjoyed. The first thing I enjoyed was playing the community game where we had to pick up cards and use our imagination to make shelter. The last thing I liked was the Herpetology. We got to pass around turtles and it was really fun. We also got to touch a very pretty patterned snake. I liked visiting Camp Don Lee again. ✚

Hope Hasher

5th Grade field trip, Vanceboro Farm Life Elementary

In early November we went to Camp Don Lee. We went there to have an outdoor experience and to have fun. I loved making candles and eating s'mores. When I was making a candle, I had a choice of color for it. I was trying to make it green-blue, but just ended up with blue. With the cycle of dipping the string in the wax, then in water, it was soon a thick blue candle. Now the s'mores was my favorite part. They were so delicious. We roasted our own marshmallows on an iron fork. The staff slid my marshmallow onto a graham cracker with a Hershey bar. Those were my favorite activities at Camp Don Lee. ✚

Da'Sean Clark

5th Grade field trip, Vanceboro Farm Life Elementary

☐ *Tuesday, February 26*

18TH DAY OF LENT

26 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Luke 15:20 *But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

There is no other story quite like the parable of the Loving Father (Luke 15:11-32). We often call it the parable of the prodigal son, but it's primarily about the father. You see, the son had wandered off and taken away everything that his father had given to him despite everything that the father had invested in him. But, remember, the story is really about the father. . . and about investment. Investment is very important. And godly investments really do pay off.

The kid had been raised right. He had been taught right from wrong. Dad had even taken him to church every week and shown him the way of the Lord. The boy had everything going for him. Then suddenly – inexplicably – something changed. The son came to dad one day and asked that his inheritance be given to him early. The father must have struggled with it: "Why, son? You have everything you need now. You have a place here." The son probably said, "Dad, I'm ready to be my own person. I so much want to be out on my own. I need to be

able to do my own thing, to make my own decisions. I really need to get away from you and this place." This greatly grieved the loving father for he loved his child more than his own life. But, with great pain in his heart, he granted his son what he asked. So the son, feeling free, packed his bags (including his wallet) and moved far away from home.

The father never for a moment forgot his son. Every day he went to the road and stood watch. He looked; he waited; he hoped. He looked; he waited; he hoped. And every day he came back saddened. He wondered constantly, "Is my child okay? If only he were with me." He even shed some tears. Most importantly of all, though, the father was faithful. He really did love his boy. And every day, he made his faithful vigil – hoping, even against hope – that his child would come back to him.

Then one day, a miracle happened. The father saw movement a long way down the road. He looked hard. Yes, someone was coming. Could it be? Hope began to well up inside. Common sense dictated that he should try to contain it so as to not have it dashed again. Yet he could not stop it. He looked even harder. Yes, he thought, I know that silhouette. I know that gait. Yes. . . could it really be? Yes, it is my child. The father began to walk toward the approaching figure. Then he began to pick up the pace – faster and faster. He began to run. Yes, it was his son. He raced up and threw his arms around the weary boy's dirty body. The kid's clothes were torn. They were as filthy rags. His money had long since been taken away. He had no shoes on his feet. But in his dad's affirming embrace, it became clear that none of that mattered; for this was home. Through tears of joy, the father began shouting to all who would hear, "Let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The son was now in the arms of the father from whose heart he had never escaped. You see, the son always had a place because he had a loving and faithful father. True, the child's repentance became his instant and complete restoration. Yet, we can never forget that it was the father's light, both before and after the son's wandering, which enabled the son to find his way back home.

We each have our times of wandering. But, we too have a loving and faithful Father. Is there any greater blessing than knowing that we are always a part of His family? Is there any greater blessing than knowing that we have a Father who has invested himself so completely in us that we can never truly get away? Is there any greater blessing than knowing that there is a grace born of a love that is eternally ours through Jesus Christ? During this time of Lent, let us all think deeply on such things, and in so doing, begin living a more victorious Christian life. ✚

Joe Stallings

Camp Staff 1979-1983, Father of Camper, Local Camp Committee

☐ *Wednesday, February 27*

19TH DAY OF LENT

25 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 118:24 *This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

This past fall my son, Chip, and I went to Camp Don Lee for the Father/Son/Daughter weekend. There were many activities that we both enjoyed, but I think the most memorable time was the few hours we spent on Gatlin Creek headed toward the beaver dam.

As we canoed and talked, we were constantly looking for snakes or maybe an alligator. In several patches of mud Chip could see alligator slides. We were sure we would see an alligator somewhere but they must have just seen us first since we never did sight one. We did enjoy seeing other wildlife such as one particularly large blue heron. We first saw its magnificence off in the distance and then again a little closer.

As we kept paddling up the winding creek, the waterway became narrower with every curve. When we got close to the end where the beaver dam was supposed to be we saw other families had already made it to the dam and were turning to start their way back. We made the final turn and saw one of the other dads and his son stopped in front of a small beaver dam where a little water was flowing over the top. Of course my son wanted to go inside the dam to visit with the beavers and maybe watch some TV. I guess that is what 11 years of cartoons will do to you.

As the others started back I said to my son “Why don’t we try to go over this dam and see if we can continue a little further.” We did and just around the next turn it was like a beaver’s dam right out of the movies. The sticks were piled high and the water had flooded the area above the dam. There was just a little trickle of water coming through the sticks. What a marvelous sight to see. That was the first time I had seen anything like that. We just sat there a while watching and listening and looking for wildlife. We soon started back enjoying just paddling our way down the winding creek. Around one turn in the creek there was the blue heron we had seen earlier but this time he was right beside us. As we closed in slowly he looked and then spread his wings and flew away.

We continued back toward the camp and wondered aloud what God may have in store for us around the next bend. As we neared the end of our trip, my only thought was what a wonderful day this has been. We have truly been blessed by God to share this time together.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we are so thankful the time we have to share with each other and to marvel at the world you have created. Each day is truly a day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen. †

Keith Cannon

Camper, Family Camper, Camp Staff, Local Camp Committee

☐ *Thursday, February 28*

20TH DAY OF LENT

24 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 46:10 *Be still and know that I am God.*

This summer I completed the L.I.T. program at Camp Don Lee. This was the most challenging thing I have ever done in my life. L.I.T. pushed me physically, mentally, and more than anything else, it pushed me spiritually. During this month of exhausting activity, our whole group was in dire need of a break. Thankfully, this break came on a day about halfway through our time at camp. This was our day apart; everyone in the group had heard of this magical day where we got to sit back, relax, and most importantly, eat as much junk food as our hearts desired. When this day began I didn’t think that the most powerfully spiritual moment of my life would happen.

While on our day apart, each L.I.T. received a package of letters from friends and family and letters from our coordinators and mentors at camp. This caused many L.I.T.’s to cry and become very emotional since we hadn’t been home for a while and missed those family and friends. Also that day Penny Farmer had us do a series of Bible studies to make us think about God and how He was working for us during our time as L.I.T.’s. This was all great, but the best part was still to come. Penny said that she was going to show us something that would help us see God.

It is hard for me to remember the details of exactly what happened after this, but we were told to close our eyes and relax. I do remember her saying something about being light and floating. This was strange as I did feel very light and floating almost. She then began to speak of a man on a beach and I could see him as if he were right in front of me. After this, things became almost impossible to remember and I think I might have fallen asleep. I do remember experiencing God and feeling as though nothing could harm me as long as I believed in Him. †

Jackson Bunn

Camper, L.I.T.

☐ Friday, February 29

21ST DAY OF LENT

23 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 63:2-4 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you. . . I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

It was summer of 2005. I was 13 years old and was experiencing my first year as a Tweeker. Tweeker is a cool word to describe those of us who are at Camp Don Lee for a full two weeks. I was so excited but still nervous about the thought of being away from home for so long. After missing a few turns along the way, my dad and I finally arrive at the camp. Immediately after getting squared away with registration and getting my bags secured, I learned that my group was first to go sailing that day. I said goodbye to Dad, rifled through my bag, found my swim suit, and was ready within minutes. No matter if it's on board a Hobie, a sunfish or an Aquafin, I love sailing at Camp Don Lee.

Later in the week, we took a trip to Croatan. Croatan is a forest reserve named after the Croatan Indian tribe and is located several miles south of Camp Don Lee on the Neuse River. It was my longest sail ever. To complicate things, we had no wind whatsoever that day. This particular sailboat required a two man (girl) crew. While one person was doing the tiller and sheet (sail), the other was on the bow paddling with her hands trying to make some headway. After finally reaching Croatan, we pitched our tents, made dinner, and chilled for the rest of the night. We wouldn't have rested so well if we had known what was in store for us the next day.

We arose early to a beautiful warm sunny day. There was not a cloud in the sky but still just enough wind to make an easy sail back to camp. We spent the morning having breakfast and exploring the forests of Croatan. Around noon we set sail back to Camp Don Lee. By then, the wind had picked up a bit more and on the distant horizon were looming dark clouds. We were confident that with such a wind, we could be back in camp before the clouds would catch us. As we sailed, the sky became darker and darker. Soon raindrops began to fall and the water became rough with swells and breakers. We found ourselves in a full fledged storm at high seas! My sailing partner became frantically scared and if I were to admit it, so was I. I kept telling her we would be alright and took control of the boat. With the help of the Lord, I amazingly got us safely back to camp. I've never felt closer to the Lord.

Thank goodness my second week was less adventurous, but nevertheless still a lot of fun. We took a trip the Atlantic Ocean with the Mariners. The Mariners are the campers who, unlike Tweekers, stay at camp for three weeks. At night we played "Capture the Flag" with the Mariners, but no one won because it took so long to find the flag. Later, we slept on the pier.

Our group took a total of three sailing trips in the two week period. I made new friends, saw old friends and even learned how to pitch a tent. It was all so much fun. I think that the summer of 2005 was my favorite year at Camp Don Lee. I always look forward to going back every summer as it is such a great Christian experience. My dream is to someday become a counselor at Camp Don Lee. If being a Tweeker can be this much fun, imagine what a whole summer could be! †

Susanna Langdon
Camper 2003-2007

☐ Saturday, March 1

22ND DAY OF LENT

22 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

2 Timothy 1:6-7 For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you. . . for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

I often get caught up in the "busyness" of life. Meetings, family responsibilities, gatherings with friends, health, work, church . . . the list stays full and sometimes I get overwhelmed. At these moments, I have to pause and remind myself that much of this "busyness" is good stuff. It's not what has to be done but my perspective that is the problem. God has blessed me with many opportunities and the means through Christ to address (and enjoy) them.

Rekindling the gift of God that is within me does take intentionality. One of the best ways I know is to get outside and be a part of God's creation. One of the many blessings I have received from my Don Lee experience is those incredible outdoor moments – being out of sight of land for the first time on a Hobie Cat in the Pamlico sound, seeing a truly star-filled sky from Portsmouth, enjoying the quiet peace of sunrise over the water – in which God makes His presence known. This time of reflection and renewal is another opportunity to reconnect and celebrate God's gifts to us. †

Amanda Tilley
Camper, Staff, Board Member-NCUM Camp and Retreat Ministries

Monday, March 3

23RD DAY OF LENT

20 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.*

My mother was a hard working Christian woman, a survivor of the depression. She married, raised four sons and one daughter, lost her husband and later lost two sons in an airplane accident. She survived all this and went on with her life.

She loved to work in her vegetable garden, tend to her patch of flowers and she was the best cook who ever cooked on a wood burning stove. She could cook for a table full of hungry boarders as well as prepare and serve her Woman's Club or Missionary Society elegant refreshments. Her kitchen was full of well-used dishes, pots, pans and utensils; some of which could be classified as antiques today.

When "Mama" passed away, she left a simple estate will for my two remaining brothers and me along with a handwritten codicil which divided items between the three of us. One brother was to get the nice set of real china; the other brother was to have the cut-glass crystal punch bowl set. As for me, the only daughter, I was given the "kitchen dishes."

At first, I was a little disappointed at what I thought was the least of the bequeaths (I prayed that I would not act ungrateful). But as I carefully wrapped and packed all those "kitchen" items that Mama had so lovingly used through all those years, so many memories came rushing back, and I came to realize that I had received the best inheritance after all.

And now, when I put fruit in the old blue pottery bowl, or catch a glimpse of Mama's butter molds on my kitchen shelf or admire the bunch of sunflowers in the brown crockery tea pitcher, I think having the "kitchen dishes" is different from inheriting china and crystal. It's the simple treasures from by gone times that bring pleasure and memories that last. This makes me happy and thankful to have the "kitchen dishes."

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for a mother's wisdom to know what we need (or what is best for us) even before we know it ourselves. Amen. ✚

Lib Daly
Junior Counselor 1950

Tuesday, March 4

24TH DAY OF LENT

19 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 66:8-9 *Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of His praise be heard, who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip.*

This scripture text presents us with an interesting thought. It speaks of a "two-way" blessing. The message calls us as the people of God to give our praise to the Lord. In doing so, we are actually being a blessing to God! The heart of God burns for us to lift Him up in praise. He calls us to shout and proclaim His name to the world. He calls us to sing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs. He calls us to share His Good News with all who have ears to hear. And why would we desire to do this? For the Lord has "kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip." Through Jesus Christ, God has given us the gift of His eternal life and the gift of His sustaining grace! He gives and He keeps. He creates and He sustains. Remember in this Lenten season, as in all seasons, to praise the name of Jesus – the Name above all names! It is amazing to realize that our praises are blessings to the heart of the One who is the Source of all of our blessings! ✚

Joe Stallings
Camp Staff 1979-1983, Father of Camper, Local Camp Committee

Wednesday, March 5

25TH DAY OF LENT

18 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

3 John 5 *Dear Friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you.*

I was put in bed not able to sit up for four days because of a very normal reaction to a spinal tap. If you don't know, that's when they take a humongous needle and stick it into your spine to see if you are bleeding or not. It isn't the most pleasant thing in the world. During my time on the living room couch, I went through at least six movies, three episodes of 7th Heaven, and five episodes of Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. I began to get upset that none of my friends had come to check up on me. A couple of phone calls and a few emails, but not one of my close friends had come to visit. I felt a little selfish for having these feelings, but figured that most people would feel that way. I mean they really didn't have an excuse; it wasn't like I was going anywhere. I was practically chained to the couch! – *cont'd on p. 26*

The morning of the fourth day, I rolled over to see a white teddy bear holding a smiley face and a basket of gummy bears with a "Get Well Soon" balloon. That definitely was not there the day before when I fell asleep! I asked my mother who they were from and she said that she did not know the man. You see, my mom writes a parenting article in the newspaper. This means that my sister and I are known throughout the town because of these blurbs in the paper. He overheard her telling a woman in the grocery store how sick I was; because he read about me each week, he just wanted to show he cared. A man who didn't know me personally, or any of my family, cared about me enough to get me a teddy bear and candy! I felt so incredibly blessed by God. †

Shelby Smith
Camper

☐ Thursday, March 6

26TH DAY OF LENT

17 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

My first thought about the word blessings is "appreciate them." It's not always easy, but I try to be thankful for the little everyday blessings that make life run more smoothly – the stoplight that changes to green as I approach it, the empty parking space right by the store entrance, the helpful cashier taking returns at the store when I don't have the receipt.

I have to remind myself to pay attention to the bigger blessings too as I sometimes take them for granted. Good health, family, friends, employment; sometimes these things aren't truly appreciated until they are threatened. Nurturing these blessings is a way that I can express gratitude for them and hopefully extend their presence: exercising, maintaining friendships and family ties, and working hard at my job.

"Thank you" is a powerful phrase when said both to people and in prayer, and I am going to try to say it more often, both for the big things and the little ones. †

Jeanne Stallings
Camper 1982-1986, L.I.T. 1987, Camp Staff 1988-1992

☐ Friday, March 7

27TH DAY OF LENT

16 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

1 Corinthians 1:18 *The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.*

Have you ever gone to work for a man who told you that it would take a miracle for you to complete the job? I have. When our little three-man crew showed up at Camp Don Lee, John Farmer greeted us. He knew Keith from his many years in participating in Don Lee activities, that he was an elementary school PE teacher, and that he had very little carpenter experience. Scott was introduced as a fireman with the city of New Bern, and I was introduced as a catfish farmer. John Farmer's remark about needing a miracle came after he had explained what the job consisted of – major repairs on the pier. What he didn't know was that between Scott and me, there was over 40 years of experience in building construction.

Let me tell you what our job consisted of on this mid-November morning in 2005. The Camp Don Lee pier had been severely damaged during the fall hurricane season. The pilings at the shoreline and other sections were "washed up," and several sections destroyed. John Farmer also dreamed of a handrail being installed down the length of the pier before camping season began the next summer. A truckload of salt-treated lumber had been delivered for the job, but it had been unloaded a couple of hundred feet away, across the sandy beach.

An earlier crew had worked on the pier, but they did not take on the challenge of settling the posts back down to grade. They spent most of their day replacing weak boards on the pier and getting the side rails started. After what that crew had been able to repair in a day, John Farmer did not have a lot of faith that a PE teacher, a fireman, and a fish farmer would be able to get a lot done, even though Keith had promised him a crew that would rebuild the pier.

After looking over the job, our crew leader, Scott, decided we would start at the shoreline if John Farmer had a pump with which to settle posts. He brought two for us to check out. He hung around to see how we intended to settle posts which were wedged up by the attached sections of pier – shifted to the point that they were holding the posts up approximately two feet above grade. We started unloading tools. Out came the nail guns, cordless drills, generator, and saws. After taking two pumps apart to get one pump working, it was just a few minutes until the post was cut from the sections, settled down to grade, and then reattached to the sections again. John Farmer realized then that this was not his average crew that had shown up to work! – *cont'd on p. 28*

Off we went to repairing the pier. Keith quickly realized that he was out of his field with the measuring, cutting, and nailing going on at this fast pace, so he volunteered to keep the lumber coming to us as we worked. He soon found out it was too much of a chore for him to handle on his own. We decided that we would all move a big pile of lumber across the sandy beach, and then Keith would carry it on the pier for us.

We worked hard, and needless to say, by lunch we were ready to eat. And eat we did! The staff at Don Lee had prepared a big lunch for us, as well as for another crew of eight who were cutting up some trees that had been uprooted. After some good food and fellowship with the other crew, back to work we went.

Around 3:30 PM John Farmer walked back over to see what had taken place with the pier repairs during the day. What he found was that we had run out of lumber! We had finished up the pier walkway, erected as much handrail as he had lumber for, and had the pier top finished all the way out to the end platform. As John Farmer walked out on his new pier, he was amazed at what three people had accomplished working over the cold November water of the Neuse River – on a pier that hours earlier looked as if it might have been the setting for a horror movie! Our remarks to him as he approached us were to never give up on miracles – they happen every day. John Farmer shared with us that even though the pier had been damaged several times in the last umpteen years, the cross at the end had withstood it all. We knew then that all day our job had been building a way back to the cross. Our hope is that many people will find that way – down the pier – meeting Jesus there at the cross.

It had been a rewarding day for us. As we loaded up our tools, we knew that with just a few more hours of time that would be needed to finish the handrails and end platform, the Camp Don Lee pier would be in the best shape that it had been in for years. In the summertime, campers from everywhere would be enjoying the miracle that we had helped take place that day.

Remember, if you have a group who wants to volunteer, John Farmer can always find a job to fit your talents. I promise that you will leave Camp Don Lee with a great feeling of accomplishment. ✚

Perry Morris
Vanceboro United Methodist Church

☐ *Saturday, March 8*

28TH DAY OF LENT

15 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.*

As I sit here and write I can see that beautiful summer day on the Neuse River back in the summer of '76. We had just left the shores of Camp Perry, the famous Don Lee outpost near Oriental, where I had spent the weekend with my Tweeker group. The water was a little rough and we had a good wind to take us back to Don Lee. As we were sailing along everyone was a little tired as I am sure we were all up all night (I don't remember ever getting any sleep at Camp Perry). We were all getting a few laughs at some of the crazy things we did over the weekend.

Out of nowhere, a wind gust came and rocked the boat. As the boat straightened up, the main shroud came loose and the boom fell and hit my best friend on the head. We scrambled to get the boom up, the sail back up and to tighten the shroud. My friend, "John," was in a lot of pain as we sailed up the Neuse back to camp. The sailing staff person that was sailing our boat grew very concerned that we still had at least an hour trip left ahead of us. John seemed to be drifting in and out of consciousness. We decided that we needed to get him in the bow of the boat and lay him down. We gathered as many towels as we could and wrapped him up. He seemed to be getting cold and his skin color was not good.

We continued our sail up river until we finally made camp. It was a wonderful sight to see. We alerted the staff on shore and they assisted in swiftly moving him out of the sail boat and up the beach and to the nurse's hut. Within minutes, John was carried to New Bern to the hospital. After a short while my friend returned and we were all relieved the he was going to be okay. One of my strongest memories on that sail boat is that we all prayed that our friend would be okay. Who knows why the shroud gave way and why my friend was struck in the head, but we can be assured that Jesus Christ was with us on the water that day and His healing hands were at work.

Prayer: Dear Lord, as we go through the Lenten season keep us mindful of the many ways we are protected and cared for by Your hands. Amen. ✚

Keith Cannon
Camper, Family Camper, Camp Staff, Local Camp Committee

☐ *Monday, March 10*

29TH DAY OF LENT

13 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

2 Samuel 22:50 (The Living Bible) *No wonder I give thanks to you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing praises to your name.*

James W. Moore in his little book, *Jesus' Parables of the Lost and Found*, has a funny story which serves as a good introduction to the topic of "Blessings." I will give you the short version of the story:

A pastor looked out his study window and saw a little kitten was stuck in a skinny tree in his backyard. The kitten was frightened and was afraid to come down. The pastor tried to get the kitten to come down, but it wouldn't. The tree was too flimsy for the minister to climb. The minister came up with the idea of tying one end of a rope to the tree and the other to the bumper of his car, thus bending the tree over to reach the cat. Things seemed to be working out, but the tree was not bent over quite enough to get the kitten out. So the pastor went a little further with the car. But the rope broke and the kitten went sailing over the fence and out of sight. Having no success in finding the kitten, the pastor felt terrible but there was nothing to do but to pray for the kitten, which he did. He prayed a prayer which committed the kitten to the Lord's care.

Several days later the minister was in the grocery store and noticed one of his parishioners buying cat food. He asked why she was buying cat food, since he knew she did not own a cat. The woman said, "Pastor, you won't believe what I am going to tell you." She proceeded to tell him that her daughter had been constantly begging her for a cat, but she kept saying "No." Finally, after repeated pleadings, she told the daughter that if you pray to God about it, and if God sends you a cat, you can keep it. "Well," the woman said, "my daughter went out in the backyard, got on her knees and prayed. And would you believe that while she was praying, this kitten came flying through the air and landed right in front of her. We named him Matthew, which means 'Gift from God.'"

Now this is a funny story, but how many times have we prayed to God and had a "yes" answer to our prayer? Did we say, "Thank you, God"? Do we thank God when "asked for" and "unasked for" blessings come our way? We should! Probably most of us who are reading this have been very blessed! Thank God for your wife, children, mother, father, friends, job, health, home, food. . . Thank God for your blessings!

Prayer: O God, we are blessed in so many ways! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! ✚

Conrad Glass

Former Camp Director and Counselor

☐ *Tuesday, March 11*

30TH DAY OF LENT

12 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Deuteronomy 2:7 *Surely the Lord your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; He knows your are going through this great wilderness. These 40 years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.*

On August 3, 2007 I turned 40 years old. Some of my closest friends from Camp Don Lee such as David Davis, Scott Glass, and Kevin Mangum all hit this milestone birthday in the past year as well. What is it about this number, at least in my case, that makes your eyes start to go or you knees start to hurt? After all, it is just an arbitrary number or is it? You will find many references to the number 40 throughout the Bible: Noah and the 40 days of rain, Jesus and the 40 days of temptation, and the Israelites and their 40 years in the wilderness just to name a few. Today's scripture references the 40 years the Israelites had been roaming on their way to the promised land. They are reminded that during these 40 years God has blessed them and they have lacked nothing.

As I look back at the first 40 years of my life, I also am reminded that I have lacked nothing and God has truly blessed all my undertakings. I had a wonderful childhood with caring and loving parents. My brother and I make the most of the time we have together and have a wonderful relationship. I have a wonderful wife and three young sons full of energy. I have several close friendships, some of which date back 20 years or more. I have been blessed with so much in my life, and despite the fact that I may complain from time to time about what I don't have, I have lacked nothing.

While I understand nothing is for certain, I look forward to the next 40 years of my life and all the blessings that will come with it. ✚

Phillip Edwards

Camp Staff 1986-1990, Family Camper (20+ years), Father of Camper 2006-2007

☐ Wednesday, March 12

31ST DAY OF LENT

11 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Matthew 25:35-40 *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*

In his story collection entitled *The Beggar King and The Secret of Happiness*, Joel Ben Izzy includes a story called, "The Border Guard." The story begins:

"There was once a Swiss guard who worked at the border of Austria. He had worked there for many years and took a great deal of pride in his work. One morning an Austrian man arrived at the border, riding a bicycle. On the front of the bike was a basket filled with sand. Another guard might have simply waved him through, but the Swiss guard did not. Instead, he brought out a special comb he kept for just such a purpose and began to sift through the sand in the basket. You see, he suspected the Austrian might be a smuggler. Finding nothing but sand however, he waved the man through.

The same thing happened the next day and the day after that. Though he never found anything, he kept on looking, day after day, for 30 years. Finally, one day the Swiss guard spoke to the Austrian man. "I must ask you a question," he said, "that has been on my mind many years. This is my last day of work. Today I shall retire. And all these years, I suspect you have been a smuggler. Now I ask you, for I must know – are you indeed a smuggler?"

The Austrian hesitated, and the Swiss guard reassured him. "Do not worry – I give you my word of honor that I will not prosecute you. But I must know." "Very well," said the Austrian. "Then I will tell you – I am indeed a smuggler."

"Ah-ha!" said the guard. "I knew it! But each day I look through your basket and find nothing but sand. Tell me please what you have been smuggling?" "Bicycles!" said the Austrian.

Indeed sometimes the answer is right in front of our face, yet we struggle to see it because it is almost too obvious. I think the same is true with Christ. We often talk about needing to go on retreat or the need to have a mountain to experience in order to "see" Christ. While we all are in need of retreat at certain times in our lives, we also have been called to live in the present moment. That means, "seeing" and "experiencing" Christ in our everyday lives.

The Good News is that we don't have to spend 30 years sifting through the sand of life to find Him! Rather Christ is present before us every day. He is in the faces of the members of our family; in the words spoken by a true friend. He is in the eyes of the hungry, the homeless, and the lost. He is in the heart of children. The question becomes, "Will we acknowledge Him or are we too busy looking elsewhere?" Let's be careful not to miss the obvious blessings this Lenten season! ✚

Ben Williams

Camper 1983-1993, Camp Staff 1994-2001, Local Camp Committee

☐ Thursday, March 13

32ND DAY OF LENT

10 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Matthew 13:3-9 *Then He told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear."*

I have been going to Camp Don Lee since I was seven years old (for the past six years). It is the thing I look forward to the most every summer. I can remember the first time I went, I wasn't so sure if camp was my thing but everyone that had been said only good things about Camp Don Lee. To this day I love Don Lee! Every laugh, drop-off and pick-up, song sung, bible verse read, friend made, and boat sailed has made me who I am today.

In Matthew 13:1-23, The Parable of the Sower, Jesus tells how people grow in faith. As the sower sows his/her seeds, some fall onto a path but cannot grow because the birds eat them. Some seeds even fall onto rocky ground, and have no soil for their roots to grow into. Other seeds fall in the thorns, and get choked. A number of fortunate seeds will fall onto fertile soil and grow up big and strong. This reminds me that some people (seeds) grow up in difficult places where it is hard to grow in faith. Some people find their fertile soil in their homes or their church. I not only have grown in those places but I have also been fortunate enough to grow at Camp Don Lee, my fertile soil! ✚

Grayson Hicks, 13

Camper for six years

☐ Friday, March 14

33RD DAY OF LENT

9 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Matthew 25:21 *His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant."*

It is almost midnight on December 12th. I was just in bed thinking of the mad rush that tomorrow will bring – lunches to pack, trips to schools, last minute birthday party preparations for our soon-to-be 7-year old, Christmas gifts to purchase, devotional to write (I am working under the December 21st deadline that my own husband has set) and knew I needed to get out of my warm bed (where he lay sleeping) to write. As the computer was warming up, I began thinking about our theme, "Blessings." It seems an odd theme for Lent. Could the dark days of Lent be a blessing?

I must admit something to you – I like Lent. What is to like about this solemn season? It seems right to me that we need 40 days to prepare our souls to receive this gift – the Greatest Gift. We cannot fully appreciate this gift unless we prepare for it.

Thinking about Lent, I am reminded of those Friday nights after a week of teaching school. The work week was over, busy and stressful as most work weeks are. Nothing was sweeter than the night that signaled its end. Friday night would not have been nearly as sweet if the week had not been as difficult and busy and fruitful as it had been. A reward is just not as sweet if it is not well-deserved. We all desire to hear the words the master replies in Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Is this not what life is all about...that at the end we will receive the greatest reward?

Preparation of our hearts is hard work. Soul searching is not easy. It requires examining our lives and takes time. How gracious God is to give us the blessing of these 40 days.

I pray for you and for me that during this season of Lent we will not let our daily to-do's overshadow what is of eternal significance. I pray that we might look inward during these lonely days of Lent and let God into our lives to refine those attitudes, behaviors, and desires that keep us from fully experiencing the great joy that is Easter.

May your Lenten journey be one of introspection and submission so that your Easter may be especially sweet.

Prayer: Help us Lord to think of the solemnity of this season of Lent as a blessing, as a time you have graciously given us. Help us not to squander these 40 days to but to use them to prepare our hearts so that when Easter arrives we will know joy that can only come from you. Amen. ✚

Bonnie Glass

Counselor, Mariner and L.I.T. Coordinator 1989-1991

☐ Saturday, March 15

34TH DAY OF LENT

8 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Chronicles 16:34 *Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.*

This Lenten season, it is easy for me to focus on God's blessings. I am totally and completely blown away with His provision for me and my life, not to mention that He is working for the good in each and every soul He created. It is refreshing to be able to recognize the blessings in our lives. This year it is not necessary for me to look very hard; God has given me one of the greatest blessings He can give – a husband to love me and someone I will share my life with. My family has doubled and God has given me another set of parents to show me how to live as a Christian. The ones most dear to me, my mom, dad and sister are near to me and we have made many happy memories together this year. I think God has given our family this season of constant support and togetherness so that we will be able to make it through the next few that are mysteries to us right now. Camp Don Lee was that season of constant support for me while I was a camper and on staff. It is only a season, but it is more than enough to prepare us for the mysteries that lay ahead. I thank God for my season at camp, my season of mystery, and my season of support and encouragement. I welcome the indefinite because He has proven to me that He will carry me through each season.

Take a moment to recognize your blessings, and ask God to carry you through the question marks in your life. He will not let you down.

Prayer: Father God, help us to focus on your Goodness this Lenten season. We praise you for all you have done and will do for us. Come into our lives and help us through our hard times so that we can enjoy the good things you give to us. In your Son's name we pray, Amen. ✚

Rebecca Bruton Edwards

Camper and Camp Staff 1990-2003

Monday, March 17

35TH DAY OF LENT

6 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Ephesians 3:17-19 *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

What a gift to be able to grasp the width, length, height and depth of Christ’s love! Although I have been showered with blessings throughout my life, this specific date – March 17th – marks one of the most powerful displays of God’s blessings in my life so far.

Five years ago today my husband, Rick, began his first of four rounds of chemotherapy. As I struggled to make sense of all that we were going through, I was carried through my days by God’s love and blessings. Not a detail was missed! Precious friends and family took over – babysitting our children during Rick’s treatments, mowing the lawn, making prayer cards to remind folks to pray for Rick and our family, phone calls, cards, delivering meal after meal to our door and constantly praying for us all. We even had our own personalized chemo calendar with a memory to make us laugh for each of the many days of chemo.

The hands and feet of Christ (and healing – thanks be to God!) were so evident to us during those days through the blessings of others. We were truly filled with the measure of the fullness of God. What a blessing! †

*Sara Raynor Dail
Camper and Counselor, 1984-1992*

Tuesday, March 18

36TH DAY OF LENT

5 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Luke 17:11-19 *Now on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When He saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw*

he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him—and he was a Samaritan.

Life is never perfect. Relationships don’t turn out the way we want, jobs turn out to be work and there never seems to be enough money, no matter what you do for a living. It’s easy to dwell on all the things you don’t have in life or on the ways life could be better.

Maybe it’s too easy. We all seem to do it. There always seems to be that one thing missing that would make life just right, one thing that would provide the cherry topping to the ice cream sundae of life. The hard thing to do is to count your blessings and be content with what you have. Harder still is to be thankful for all those things. But it’s a lesson that God wants us to learn.

Think about it. When we pray, we all ask for things we’d like or for things we lack. We pray for better relationships, better jobs or a little financial help from above. We pray for help with our exams or for God to get us out of trouble or for God to heal our sicknesses. And, most of the time, God answers those prayers and we do fine on our exam and we manage to find a way to pay our bills. We’re all still here anyway, right? But how often do we really stop and thank God for those answered prayers, for those blessings and gifts that He has given us?

I am reminded of the story in Luke 17 in which Jesus heals ten men of leprosy. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem when He meets ten lepers along the way. These ten men pray for Jesus to have pity on them and heal them of their disease. Jesus instructs the men to go to the temple and cleanse themselves. They follow His instructions and are healed of their disease.

In the end, only one of the men, a Samaritan, returns to Jesus to give thanks for the miracle of his healing. Jesus says, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

I often wonder what happened to the other nine lepers. Did they get to keep the gift of healing that Jesus gave them or did they become sick again because they were not thankful for the blessing bestowed upon them? The Bible doesn’t say. The story ends with Jesus dismissing the Samaritan saying “Then He said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

No matter how the story ends, I think it serves to illustrate how God expects us to react when He gives us a gift or answers a prayer or blesses us with a blessing. He wants us to realize that it is His power that has blessed us and He wants us to return to Him in praise each and every day. †

*Charlie Stafford
Camper, Sailing Staff and Counselor 1987-1994*

☐ Wednesday, March 19

37TH DAY OF LENT

4 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

In reflecting upon the theme, I thought how blessed we are that God has given us the gift of prayer. In the first aspect of this verse, we see how simple God has made it for us:

"Ask, and it shall be given you. . ."

I still try and get down to Don Lee a few times a year, especially if the fishing is good. For the last few trips, my boys, Holden (6) and Grant (3), have made the trip down with me. We try and do some of the usual camp stuff as well as fish for drum each evening. As this trip would have it, we were in the third and final day of the trip and the fishing had been terrible. As in, nothing had been caught, ZERO! Now, I'm pretty skilled with a fishing rod, especially around camp and the lower Neuse River and Farmer John can attest to this fact. This was some tough fishing! As the sun set, the boys wanted a camp fire so I built us up a nice one on the beach down by the old boat ramp and jetty area. As darkness set, we still had not had as much as a nibble. Holden then tells me, "Dad, I said a prayer to God that we would catch a puppy drum." I responded that I was very thankful he said a prayer for us. As the minutes passed and still no fish, I started to think up a response to the boys along the lines that God sometimes answers our prayers in ways that we may not understand or even realize at the time. Before I get say anything though, my rod doubled over and the drag started singing and I had a good drum bite! Unfortunately, the hook pulled and the fish got away. Thinking maybe God does have a sense of humor, I re-baited and cast back out. Within seconds, another heavy pull and tug of a drum. After making sure I had a good hook set, Holden and Grant (with some help from Dad) landed a nice, pretty 26-inch puppy drum. At this point, we re-baited and cast back out. Before I can put the rod down, we have another good tug and pull and solid hook up. Again, we catch a nice drum. What a great ending to the trip for us! Now, I ask you: Do you think God answered this simple prayer of a child? Did God really send us a few fish? Sure! Why not? Hey, Jesus was a fisherman and maybe He knew what it felt like go home without a good tug and pull on the end of a line. . .

The blessings we have are many. The gift of prayer and the ability to take things directly to God should give us comfort and strength in all things. Peace! ☩

Kevin Mason
Camp Staff 2000-2007

☐ Thursday, March 20

MAUNDY THURSDAY

38TH DAY OF LENT

3 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God.

Praying

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

From *Thirst*, by Mary Oliver

As I grow older and try to figure out how to celebrate the special moments of middle age, I learn more and more about the power of simplicity. And I think much of that comes from the blessings of camp.

Memories of camp strip away so many of the things I deem necessary in my regular life patterns. I am convinced that my family "needs" all these things to get through the days here in the city – cell phones, ipods, technology – and the list goes on. What I crave more than anything is simplicity. And I wonder how, in my teenage years, I ever survived without a cell phone, an ipod, a computer? (I'm still reveling in the creation of the VCR which allowed me to watch "The Wizard of Oz" more than once a year!) Memories of Don Lee remind me that camp is very simple, that my relationship with the earth is very simple and that my relationship with God is very simple. There are few requirements. I know I learned this at camp. Remembering it and carrying it out over the years is the challenge. Family camp has been the booster I need to keep that connection alive.

Think about those sustaining times – the simplicity of being clean after a couple of days in the July sun on the slow waters of the Pamlico Sound, the simple joy of having – *cont'd on p. 40*

fried chicken for dinner on Friday, the simplicity of morning watch or vespers on the pier, the seagulls and Hobie shrouds laughing and playing on the wind. What else is there? Yes, I know that city life offers more opportunities, but these days, it seems as if there are more opportunities for stress. The goal? Making it simple – maybe by simply listening to the Voice that has resorted to yelling at me because I seem to be too busy to hear.

I think Mary Oliver in her poem captured it best. It is simple. Though she only speaks of praying, I think the sentiment reaches into all parts of my life. And I think that God needs me to be still, to listen, to pray – for it is in those moments that the basics of my simple faith are clearer than ever – sunrise to the east, storm out of the northeast, tree frogs and children’s laughter, dear friends and the gentle ease of faith.

I think I can get through. ☩

Mary Beth Ferrell

Camper 1968-1979, Sailing Staff 1980-1983, Family Camper 1993-2007

Friday, March 21

GOOD FRIDAY

39TH DAY OF LENT

2 DAYS UNTIL EASTER

Psalms 23:1-2 *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters. . .*

Outside our kitchen window, my family has a small bird feeder that sticks to the glass with a suction cup. How wonderful it is when a bird or two comes to feed there while we are having dinner. If we move slowly, we can watch and admire them from only inches away until they notice us. Then out of instinct they fly away for fear of something unknown, perhaps getting caught, or worse. I wish they knew how we enjoyed them, how we would never hurt them, how we want to be near them and give them all the seed they could possibly eat. If they would just stay near us, an entire 50 lb. bag of mixed seeds would be their’s for the taking.

And there is no such thing as an ugly bird. Not once has there been one we wished would not come and feed so that we could delight in its unique beauty, no matter its size or color. If only we could tell them all this, surely they would flock to our window. If they came to know us and trust us, they would never be hungry again. We love them. It is as simple as that.

I think God feels the same way about each of us. He yearns for us to come be with Him, to feed at His table, to drink from His cup that never runs dry. He wants to be near us, to watch

over us, to be our Great Shepherd, and love us forever. And in His eyes each of us is a beautiful creation.

And for me, Camp Don Lee is like the bird feeder in my window. It is a place where all of us can draw closer to God, where God waits to feed our weary bodies and spirits – just for the asking. As we grow to know Him and trust Him in such a place as this, we learn how boundless His blessings and grace are when we accept His love. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). It is as simple as that. ☩

Brad Griffin

Camper, Father of Campers 2002-2007, Local Camp Committee

Saturday, March 22

HOLY SATURDAY

40TH DAY OF LENT

1 DAY UNTIL EASTER

Ephesians 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*

On this beautiful day, awaiting the rising of Jesus followed by a gorgeous time when the flowers and trees spring back to life, take a deep breath, relax and let your mind travel to a place that is blessed.

For me, that place is Don Lee. I feel myself lying on a bench in Vesper Dale, peeking up through the limbs at specks of blue sky, white clouds floating past. The water gently laps against the beach, the halyards quietly snap against the masts. In the hazy distance, laughter and singing float from the pier. The rushing world slows down and peace envelops me.

As you slowly pull yourself back to this world, let the contentment of that remembered place come back with you; hold onto the blessed memories and lifetime friendships created there.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us your Son. Thank you for places that allow us to glimpse the glory of Heaven. Thank you for giving us friends and family who love us and who we can love while we go through our lives on Earth. Help us be loving and supportive to others; help us share your gifts with those who need them. Amen. ☩

Elizabeth Berry

Camper 1980-1984, Camp Staff 1984, 1989, Former Local Camp Committee Member, Board Member-NCUM Camp and Retreat Ministries

☐ *Sunday, March 23*

EASTER SUNDAY

Luke 24:1-6 *On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!"*

Sometimes knowing what we are looking for can be very helpful. If we knew where to look we would not have to search nearly as much. For the women at the tomb, they were looking for the wrong thing. They were looking for the body of the dead. But to find the living, you must look in another place.

There are many stories at Camp Don Lee about searching, looking, finding the unexpected, and being "blessed." One such story, took place a number of years ago in the middle of the night when a female counselor came to the door of my house to awake me at 2:00 AM:

She was worried and nervous. She said, "I have a missing camper." Those are very frightening words in the camp community. At this time of night they bring to mind all kinds of unknown answers. As we began to go to the fellowship hall she filled me in on what was going on. She had gotten up about 1:30 to go to the bathroom and checked on her campers in their bunk. As she looked among her 10-year old girls, one bunk was empty. She thought, maybe she has gone to the bathroom also, I will just wait here until she comes back. After about five minutes when she did not return the counselor went looking. The camper was not to be found in the bathroom, her sister's cabin next door, or with the group of campers who were still talking on the end of pier as they were spending the night there.

By this time a number of non-counseling staff had been called to the fellowship hall and more were dragging themselves quickly to the gathering. We explained the situation and assigned a search pattern for small groups of the twenty or more gathered staff members. It only took about fifteen minutes to complete the initial full camp search, and we had found no young missing camper. We each were getting more anxious, including her cabin counselor who was in tears at this point.

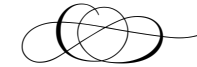
The next step was to call for outside help. As I told the group to stay put while I made the contact, the counselor went with another counselor to check the cabin again and to check on the rest of the girls. As she went bed to bed to touch and pray over each girl, she discovered

the missing girl tucked tightly behind one girl on an upper bunk, sound asleep. There was a flashlight and a book that looked like they had been reading together. When we got the news, all of us celebrated with tears of joy and prayers of Thanksgiving.

Knowing what or who we are looking for is most important. We were looking for a missing girl, when in truth she was not missing at all, she was held tightly in the family of God. Easter morning is always a powerful reminder to me of what we have been blessed with each day. The sounds of the morning birds, the movement of the early morning breeze – all point to a living God. The presence of such a spirit has been discovered many mornings for me on the shores of the Neuse River and each time I am reminded more powerfully than the day before, Jesus is Alive and is to be found among the living creation of God. ✚

Rev. John A. Farmer

Director of Camp Don Lee since Easter Sunday 1977



About Don Lee Center

Camp Don Lee serves summer campers from 7 to 17-years old from across eastern NC and beyond, but Don Lee is certainly more than a summer camp with a 60-year tradition. There are year round specialty camps in sailing, marine science and adventure. There are programs that serve children and families with cancer, sickle cell disease, acute asthma and childhood heart disease. There are programs that work with families that are dysfunctional, families that just want to spend time together, and church families who want to build strong communities. There are programs that work with thousands of school students each year in coastal environmental studies and group problem solving skills. There are training events for the church, for community leaders, and for students across the state.

Through Christian hospitality, dynamic programs and God's enabling presence, Don Lee seeks to nurture persons to become spiritually mature. Motivated by God's action of love, persons will live and practice lifestyles of care for the common good. Many have said, "Wherever people come from in their life situation, Don Lee has found a way to affirm and make me feel valued as a person." *The primary mission of Don Lee Center is to provide an experience of the Christian community where campers and guests are valued as creations of God and helped to understand and appreciate their worth, their relationship to God and to other persons, and the whole created order.*

315 Camp Don Lee Road • Arapahoe, NC 28510 • 1-800-535-5475 • www.donleecenter.org