



Trim Your Sail
and turn your ship to the Lord

Lenten Prayer Partners

Among so many people today there is a spiritual hunger and thirst of epic proportions. Children, youth, adults, and even families have a desire to live more spiritually satisfying lives. So many people wish they were more disciplined in their prayer life, their study of Scripture, and in their walks with God.

We would like to invite you to partner with others in your church and community to take special time during this upcoming season of Lent to grow in your relationship with God and to take time daily in prayer and study. If you accept this invitation your life will never be the same. But even more importantly, when you pray for this ministry it will never be the same.

Lent presents itself as a natural and necessary season for focus and regrouping. The ancient mandate for Lent was to provide a season of preparation and instruction for those who wished to be baptized, instruction for those who wished to know how to become Christians, and faithful followers of the risen Lord. Lent can be a great time of personal renewal for anyone, wherever they may be in their personal faith walk with God.

You are invited to partner with others for a time of daily devotion and meditation. Persons who join the Lenten Prayer Partners will receive a daily devotion and study guide especially prepared for this season of renewal and focus. It can be used alone or in a family devotional time each day during Lent. There is a daily email option as well as an online version. If for some reason you need a printed devotional guide, just let us know and one can be provided.

We ask that each partner pray daily during this season for the ministry of Camp Don Lee and the lives that may be enriched through this ministry. Camp Don Lee is certainly in a time of focus and renewal and asks for the support of many prayer partners.

The dream and the hope is that there will be a great number of persons praying everyday for this ministry. That alone will be enough. Lent is a time of sacrifice and focus and if each partner would make a daily offering of \$1.00 for each day in Lent. This offering would go to Don Lee Ministry support efforts.

There is no limit to the number of persons who can partner in this prayer effort of personal renewal and of prayer support for ministry in people's lives. Please sign on as a partner in God's plan for your life this Lenten season.

*Remember that God Loves you and continues to seek to be with you!
God wants you to love others as He has loved you!*

Rev. John A. Farmer, Don Lee Center Director since 1977

Day 1 • March 9, 2011

Finding Renewal

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” – Galatians 6:9

When I think about the season of Lent, I often focus on what I’m going to give up that year or how I’m going to make it 40 days without any chocolate. But really, that’s not what it’s supposed to be about. It’s supposed to be a time of reflection and preparation, and a time to refresh our commitment to God. Which, for many campers (and staff members), are some of the same benefits they see from spending a week or more at Camp Don Lee.

Camp offers kids an opportunity to be who they truly are, as they’re around new people who accept them and offer an escape from the pressures they may feel at home. For many kids, camp is a chance to forget some of the problems they may have left at home, or to see these problems from a different perspective. Camp is also a place where campers can see God in many new ways, which allows them to grow closer to Him while also making new friends and learning new skills. Finally, sometimes camp prepares kids for the coming school year by giving them exciting experiences that they will always remember and can tell all of their friends. So many campers have told me that going to back to camp is the one thing they look forward to the entire school year, and I know I feel the same way even now as a staff member.

Not all camp experiences start out like this from the very beginning though. I knew one camper who came to camp as a punishment, and so in the beginning he was not especially enthusiastic or exciting about anything we were doing. Over the course of the weeks, however, he opened up, and eventually decided that he really wanted to turn his life around based on his experiences at Camp Don Lee.

For so many campers, camp offers them a place where their mind, body, and spirit can truly be refreshed and renewed, preparing them for any struggles they may face in the coming year. And for many of them, Camp Don Lee is the place where they learn to trim their sails, both on the water and in their relationship to God.

God, please help us to use this time to truly grow closer to you and renew our commitment to you. Help us to also make it a time that we can be refreshed, while also preparing for anything in our future. Please let us remember that this should be a time of focusing on you, rather than on whatever we might have chosen to give up for this season of Lent. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Molly Spears – Summer Staff 2008-2010

March 10, 2011 • Day 2

Road Signs

Psalm 51

I’m learning as a parent that they cover more in preschool these days than when I was a child. Driving down Six Forks Road a few weeks ago, my four-year-old son, Stuart, blurted out, “Dad, that’s a U-Turn sign. That means you got to turn around!” “That’s right,” I replied, “Sometimes you miss your turn or your exit and you have to turn around and get back on track.” It hasn’t happened yet, but I’m half anticipating that the next time he gets in trouble and is headed for time out, that he is going to exclaim, “Can I just make a U-Turn?”

I’m not sure how I will answer, but I do know that God is forever inviting us to make a U-Turn. God is constantly calling us to trim our sails and turn our ship around to the Lord.” We somehow manage quite frequently to get off-track, lost, and or out of alignment with God. We cave to temptation, to peer pressure, to the false allures of material possessions. Our relationships with others get all tangled up, our priorities get reversed, and we seek after things that are not of God. We end up lured by the sirens of this world into ports of call that we never intended to visit.

The psalmist in Psalm 51, the psalm we read on Ash Wednesday, nails it. His cry is our cry. We know we have fallen short. We know we have sinned. We know we are not fully the people God intends us to be. We need help. We need to make a U-Turn. We need to turn our ship around. We need to be cleansed. We need to be pointed in a new direction – toward the Lord. We are hungry for a new heart and for a new and right spirit within.

The Good News is that no matter how far off course we are, God – the ancient of days – is always on the watch, standing ready for us to trim our sails and turn our ship around. Reflect this day on your course. Where are you on the journey? What area or areas of your life are off course? Name them. Ask for forgiveness and then trim your sails, and turn your ship around to the Lord.

*Almighty God, have mercy on me, according to your steadfast love.
Create in me a clean heart and put a new and right spirit within me. Amen.*

Ben Williams

Sailin' over the ocean, in search of life's mysteries

Day 3 • March 11, 2011

Learning How to Sail

Psalm 107:23-32

Both of my parents went to Carolina, and I grew up going to basketball and football games, so I never considered going to college anywhere else. Looking back on it, I probably should have considered whether or not a large school was a good fit for me.

Freshman year was a hard transition time. None of my friends from youth group went to college with me. I made friends with the girls on my hall instead of looking to get involved with any Christian groups on campus because they all seemed to big to be a place to find a home. My youth leader from high school, Sammy Hudson, asked me to come be a leader on a retreat that our group took every fall to Camp Don Lee. I said yes, not because I wanted to make a difference in kids' lives or serve the Lord, but because I wanted to get away from college for a weekend and visit old friends. We were given Bible study material for our small groups, which I read to the kids, but my heart wasn't in it. Then God came in and stopped me right in my tracks on the last night at a bonfire.

One of my kids came up to me and told me that he wanted to follow Jesus just like I had been talking about. Only I knew that I hadn't really been talking from my heart. Seeing how much God could do through me while I was running away from God just made me want to turn around and run back towards God. The next morning, I was asked to consider applying to work at Don Lee's summer camp. I took the application, but I didn't intend to fill it out.

After that weekend, I went back and started to fall back into the wrong crowd again, then God did something amazing again. My parents found out about my grades and my lifestyle and basically forced me to change. They made me move off my hall and they encouraged me to find a church in Chapel Hill. Over Christmas Break, they talked to me about camp and I knew that applying was the right thing to do.

My three summers on staff were incredible. I learned to dance with God. I learned that the wind is always going to blow, and instead of trying to stop it, it's better to learn how to sail. I found friends who went to Carolina so I stayed connected even during the school year. And, I learned how to be leader and I finally knew what I wanted to do with my life.

It's my last year at Duke Divinity School. Most of my most meaningful friendships are still the friendships, and I am getting married in May to someone I met that first year at camp.

Creator God, you know the plans you have for us, even before we can imagine them. Open our hearts so that we might bear you speaking in whispers in a loud world. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sarah Nickens, Summer Staff 2006-2008

March 12, 2011 • Day 4

Safe Haven

My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior. - 2 Samuel 22:3

As with all true Camp Don Lee folks, it is nearly impossible to narrow down all of my Don Lee experiences to only one defining moment! I have so many memories of feeling truly loved by God and my fellow campers and staff. I attended camp as a camper, tweeker, L.I.T. and staffer from ages 11 -21. My entire adolescence and young adulthood was influenced by my time at camp!

I do have one very distinct memory that stands out. I don't remember my age or the year but I'll never forget the feeling. There was one afternoon on a Hobie, returning to camp after a weekend trip to the Croatan Campground. These trips were always fun but the time on the water was often notoriously long! On this particular afternoon, we had endured a fierce rainstorm. I was a fair sailor but definitely not top of the class so I was probably feeling pretty grateful that the storm had passed! After the rain, the sun started breaking through the dark gray clouds. It was incredibly beautiful! I remember an overwhelming feeling of peace and thinking to myself "only God could create this!!"

I always felt that camp was my safe place. It was a place where a shy girl with glasses felt accepted, loved and truly a part of the crowd! I felt that at camp I could shine without all of the pressures of the "outside world." In today's society where Disney and Nickelodeon stars become MTV and tabloid staples, it is my fervent desire than my children have a safe haven of their own. Somewhere where they are free to be themselves, love God and learn how to truly treat others. Camp is a place where the things that are really important are given value- love, friendship and faith. Now that my oldest child is attending camp, it warms my heart to hear him say "camp is my favorite place in the whole world!" It makes me feel like we as a Camp Community are offering another generation of kids a safe haven in an increasingly chaotic world. This is something to be proud of and to protect fiercely!

Dear Lord, please protect our children. Please help them each find their safe place in the world under your loving care and attention. Amen.

Lea Johnson Wolf - Camper 1981-1985; Staff 1987-1991

Torn by tears and fears, forgotten dreams

Day 5 • March 13, 2011

Don't Give Up

“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. - Psalms 46:10-11

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. - Philippians 4:13

Camp is probably the place that I feel most at home (other than my own home, of course). It's a place I seem to always return to...even when I think I've said my final goodbye. But several summers back, I lost sight of why I always return and why I was there. That summer I arrived at camp ready for 'the best summer ever'. All of my closest friends were going to be there, my boyfriend, and I was going to get to spend the summer playing in the pool, messing around on boats, and getting a really great tan! What else could I have asked for. But about 3 days into my summer, things changed; I no longer had a boyfriend, and as a result some of my closest friends had chosen sides – and not mine. Camp is a small community, and I realized really quickly that it was going to be a long summer.

I lasted about 10 days before I was ready to give up and go home. I wanted to leave, I wanted to go home and give up on the one place that had been a staple in my life, all because a few people had let me down. I had made up my mind, and as I was walking across camp to make my decision known, something changed. Something was telling me that this was a mistake, that if I went home I would regret the decision. I started to think about how much camp meant to me and why. And it hit me – I wasn't there for my friends or the sun or the pool – I was there for children that come to camp every summer hoping that it's going to be their 'best summer ever'.

That afternoon I spent some time talking with God. I allowed him to fill my heart with love and compassion and strength. I poured my heart into the rest of the summer, and showed love and compassion to every camper & staff I met that summer. I was able to open my heart to the Lord and he led me through one of the best summers of my life. Without Him I would have spent my summer somewhere else and I would have given up on a place that had shown me so much love and compassion through-out the years. That summer I learned a lot about myself and about others but most importantly I learned that I'm not my own and when things get tough or overwhelming to “TRIM MY SAILS & TURN MY SHIP TO THE LORD.” He will always be there to take the burdens and guide me to “safety”.

Lord God, as always we ask for forgiveness. Thank you so much for always standing by us, even when we lose sight of what our purpose is. Please continue to give us strength to make it through the tough times, compassion and understanding in frustrating times and fill our hearts with an abundance of Love so that we can share with others your amazing glory. In Your Son's name, Amen.

Jessica L. Martin - Camper 1993-2002; Staff 2003-2010

Rusty old memories

March 14, 2011 • Day 6

When Life Gets Tough

Psalms 148

Crunch; Crackle; Snap. The leaves yelled beneath the heavy steps of the students at the university. Their noisy bellows were unheard by most. You see, it is not every day that one stops to appreciate a leaf for much more than its color; during the summer months they offer a blur of green hues and in the fall a palette of colorful pastels. They die off and return to earth in the weeks following fall, only to become spirits in the winter. The wind carried the leaves around and the sun shone bright. Mother Nature was practically begging for the students to notice. Unfortunately, students have lives to live and business to attend to. A crunch beneath their feet is the least of their worries...

Red, yellow, orange – the colors provided a beautiful autumn palette. The canvas? - The Appalachian mountains in the month of October. The effortless brushstrokes surrounded them like a detailed watercolor painting. Eight eyes staring into the mountainous surroundings left little to be missed; however, even those eight eyes couldn't see everything – Mother Nature provides stunning intricacies where about even a million eyes couldn't see the all of it.

As the four made their way down the road they sang together in spirited harmony; their voices may not have been on pitch or in tune per compositional standards, but they were harmonious in that they produced an atmosphere of pure elation within the vehicle. They were singing and dancing all the way to their destination. “I do believe these are the finest these mountains ever have looked.”

The music carried them on. The road beckoned them onward. The blue sky showed their lack of limitations; there was nowhere else in the world that they would rather be. It was perfection at its greatest.

School work had been trying for the four of them for the past few months. Having had the best summer of all their lives school just didn't feel the same. It was hard to focus on the realities of life when an entire summer is spent away from reality. These four all enjoyed a life of leisure and fellowship; living among children, friends, and God helped to define their summer spent on the coast. Nothing could take that summer away from them; however, time did not stop in those months nor did society. They had to learn to readapt to their lives at school and work. They had to make the transition from the coast to the mountains; from sailing to biking. What a marvelous transition to make! How lucky these four were; one beautiful extreme to the next – if these mountains were the “real” world then it seemingly wasn't going to be a hard transition. However, work was work; school was school, and a degree does not earn itself. Sometimes all anyone ever needs is a revitalizing trek through the Appalachian woods. This is exactly what they chose to do.

Enjoy what is simple. Don't forget to look up. Look at the sky and flourish in its elegance. Don't forget to feel the air around you. Open your palm and touch the wind, no matter how hard it bites, and let it embrace you as kin. Don't forget to listen. The live orchestra composed by those of the natural world is truly incomparable. Don't waste your time dying old; instead enjoy your time living young. Crunch some leaves. Sing some. Laugh.

In the summer of 2010 I was lucky enough to be hired as the Outdoor Living Skills instructor at Camp Don Lee. I left Don Lee with not only a great group of friends, but an entire family of loved ones I think about on a daily basis. I am a senior at Appalachian State and have been fortunate enough to stay in touch with a great group of summer 2010 staff. This is part of a story I wrote about an experience we had together on the Blue Ridge Parkway in early October. This story is a testament to the power of friendship and the profound effect that Camp has on our lives even long after the summer has ended.

God, thank you for your beautiful Creation and the opportunity to appreciate it with friends. Amen.

Sig Arnesen - Summer Staff 2010

Day 7 • March 15, 2011

Praying Along the Course

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

There are two things I have learned about sailing, and about God. One is that neither a sailboat nor a person will follow a straight line to their destination. The other is that it is easy to veer off course if the sailor, or the person, loses sight of where they are going

The advice to the beginning sailor remains the same, year after year. “Pick a point in the distance and aim your boat at it.” It is advice that is easy to understand, and hard to follow. As child after child discovers, even if the bow of the boat is heading in the correct direction at one moment, that does not mean the same will hold true even a second later. The forces of the world conspire against it. The wind pushes. A current pulls. Waves distract. Without constant action by the helmsman, a sailboat loses its purpose, and becomes so much flotsam on the water. The goal is lost, and its passengers are carried away by the tides of the world.

As Christians, we are told by John that “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” We are buffeted by the forces of the world in much the same way that a sailboat is by the wind and water. Short term forces and events distract us from our ultimate goal, and most are swept away, doomed to float upon the waters without purpose or direction until the end of their days.

The beginning sailor eventually realizes how to sail towards the destination they have picked on the distant shore. As the boat constantly moves, so must the tiller, to counteract the forces that would drive it into irons. This constant communication between the helmsmen and the sailboat is what gives the boat its purpose, and allows it to travel towards its destination. A sailboat, used for the purpose for which it was designed, moving through the waters of the world rather than drifting upon them, is a joy to behold.

As the sailboat and the helmsman must communicate continuously in order to function as designed, so must we stay in constant contact with God. Prayer is not a sometimes thing, nor should it be confined to certain times or places. Prayer is our primary way of staying in touch with God, the means by which we know where to aim to reach our ultimate destination, and, as with the tiller movements on a well-trimmed sailboat, our communications with Him need not be large or dramatic. “Thanks, Lord.” “Help them, Lord.” “Show me, Lord.”

Small and constant prayers are much easier, not to mention less stressful. I’ve found that the times I pray the hardest are when I have gone the farthest off course, and need a dramatic change in order to get back on course, as inevitably happens when I am distracted by the world, and forgo my small conversations with Him.

Help us, Lord. Amen.

March 16, 2011 • Day 8

God is Powerful

“Should you not fear me?” declares the LORD. “Should you not tremble in my presence? I made the sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting barrier it cannot cross. The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it.” - Jeremiah 5:22

One of the greatest features of the three-week Mariner program at Camp Don Lee is a camping excursion on the Hobie Cat sailboats, or as one of my campers called it, “the sailboat with a trampoline and two skis.” During my first mariner experience in 2004, I was excited/nervous to undertake this trip. After our sailing staff, Ryan Boyle and Katherine Bisogno, had immensely prepared us on these boats, the day came for our embarkation. By the time we had everything packed and ready to go, the wind had reached speeds of 20 to 25 knots. In addition to this, we were running downwind, which can be dangerous because of pitch pulling, where the leeward pontoon goes underwater and could potentially flip the Hobie over. Thirty minutes into sailing everything was fine, and we were together as a group. However, things started to fall apart.

Our boats began to become separated, which cause the sailing staff much grief seeing as their chase boat could barely keep up with the pace of the fast Hobies. Suddenly gusts began and boats began to flip around the Hobie I was on. I became worried. Then the wind around our Hobie began to swirl and gust, which caused our boat to pitch pull and then flip, catapulting the four of us off the boat. As soon as I surfaced, I began swimming and looking to see if everyone was ok. Just then, one of the guys in my group stood up, water only coming to his waist. We all then stood up and realized that the mast had fallen. We then saw that not only had our mast fallen, but the metal frame of our Hobie had snapped it half, like twigs. Our boat was utterly damaged beyond repair, it had begun to rain, the wind was gusting at around 30 knots, we were between the chase boat was off helping the other boats that had flipped, and there were a massive amount of jelly fish swarming around us. Things looked really bleak.

After a few minutes, we saw the chase boat approach us. As the motorboat arrived, I could see the horrified/surprised face of Katherine as she stated that she had never seen a Hobie broken completely in half before. She jumped off the chase boat as Ryan left to help the other flipped boats and began to help us gather the pieces of the broken Hobie. We then did the only thing we could do and pushed the boat to shore over a quarter mile stretch through jelly fish infested waters. While pushing the boat to shore, we all began singing “Jesus Loves Me,” which was interrupted every few seconds with a very loud exclamation of pain, as each one of us were stung multiple times. If someone was looking from an outside view, it defiantly appeared to be a funny yet desolate scene.

When I look back at this story, I am completely floored at the power that God possesses. Through the pure power of wind and physics, our Hobie broke, leaving us stranded. Still today, it astonishes me that God is powerful enough to snap the frame of a Hobie Cat completely in half, just by the forces of nature. As we prepare for Easter during this time of Lent, each of us needs to take the time to stand back and be amazed of what God has created and how powerful that creation is. In step with this, we need to realize the power God has over our lives: He has given us all gifts, especially life and Camp Don Lee. Remember to thank God every day and to rejoice in his awesome power.

God, you are powerful. We are amazed. Amen.

Andrew Pearce - Family Camper and Camper 1994-2006; Staff 2007-2010

Sail on, Sailor, till you find what it is you're lookin' for

Day 9 • March 17, 2011

The Chase Boat

Psalm 46:1-3

The chase boat has always been a symbol of safety, giving me the knowledge that there is someone taking care of me while I'm sailing. I've been sailing for a pretty long time and I pride myself in my ability to work through mistakes, twisted blocks, and the occasional lost sheet line before the chase boat has a chance to come over and help me correct my mistake. As a result, I probably haven't had as much experience admitting my shortcomings and imperfections with regards to sailing because I'm able to cover them up fairly easily. I learned a lot about the importance of accepting the help of the chase boat on July 4, 2008.

The third day of the LIT 2008 trip to Portsmouth was picture-perfect. Imagine a fleet of Hobie Cats on a beam reach in 15 or 16 knots of wind. Nobody had to tack back for the last boat, and the chase boat could barely keep up with us. Even with three people and numerous dry bags on each boat, we were almost flying hulls. By lunchtime we had decided we would try and make it back to camp and set up our tents on kayak beach for the night. A one-day journey back from Portsmouth would be pretty impressive, we thought. After only a few hours on the water we had passed through the sound and by the bombing range to make it to the Neuse River 1 marker. Our staff told us that the first boat to reach the marker had to do a 360 around it. By pure chance, my boat made it there first and we proceeded to comply, performing the mandated 360. As we were jibing we almost capsized – a small warning of what was to come.

After entering the Neuse River the swells grew to four or five feet and the wind picked up to a speed closer to 25 knots – far too rough and heavy for 16' catamarans. An hour after passing the marker and pointing up, our fleet of Hobies was scattered across the mouth of the river, some boats a mile or so away unable to tack. Before we knew it, our wonderful day of sailing was turned upside down. A shroud broke and a mast fell, another boat capsized, yet another boat capsized backwards due to the waves, sails ripped and my tiller broke. Four or five hours later we were still battling the waves and wind, unable to admit defeat. The chase boat finally decided to put an end to it and tow what was left of our boats.

Although the rest of my group was trying to hook up to the towline as well, I had a difficult time admitting to myself that I couldn't do it. I couldn't match the power of the wind, especially not with a broken boat. Turning to the chase boat, while both physically and mentally challenging, was a sign of defeat to me. I wasn't good enough to avoid this one. After spending two hours hooking the boats up to the towline we made it to shore on a random marsh at around 8 o'clock – over twelve hours after we embarked on this journey. It didn't matter though because we were safe.

As difficult as it is, we are called by God to let go in our life. Our savior tells us to let go of our worries and let go of our fear of failure. He tells us to put our trust in Him because He is our refuge and strength and will take care of us no matter what.

Letting go of my inability to battle through the wind and waves and turning to the chase boat was difficult, but very similar to what God calls us to do. I didn't have a choice that day whether I wanted to continue my futile attempt at sailing. God, however, gives us a choice. His love for us is so great that he will always be there for us when we do decide to turn to Him and let Him shoulder some of our burden. God has revealed Himself in so many ways during my time at camp, and this is one experience that I will never forget.

Dear Lord, I pray that we can learn to admit we aren't perfect and that we need your help to live in the manner and mindset that you desire. I also pray that you will continue to use Camp Don Lee as a place where you reveal yourself to us. Amen.

Robbie Patterson - Family Camper 1993-present, Camper 1997-2007, LIT 2008, Sailing Staff 2008-present

March 18, 2011 • Day 10

I Will Never Leave You

“No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” - Joshua 1:5

Unlike my oldest son, who greeted the Don Lee experience with eager anticipation and youthful confidence from day one, I was not a happy camper. Back when I was of camping age, my family had just moved to North Carolina. I was shy to begin with, and the thought of venturing even further from my source of security didn't seem like such a good idea. But after some arm-twisting, there I stood one hot Sunday afternoon in 1978, by the old fellowship hall, watching my parents drive away, leaving me alone in a place that was unknown and far away. Needless to say, I survived. By the end of that week I knew a joy and a sense of belonging that I still remember.

At some point each of will reluctantly leave our “known” world for the unknown. Whether it is our first week away from home, or the first time we sail for the opposite shore, Camp Don Lee prepares us for when we must give up our usual securities, trim our sails, and learn to rely on God alone. Going off to school, the first day at a new job, or losing a loved one; each of these things puts us in a place where we need to reach for God's loving hand. And if we are willing, scripture tells us that He is always there to comfort us, to love us, to save us and to remind us that life goes on, even after you leave the shore, even after a child goes off to college, even after we lose a job, even after death itself. No matter the time, the place or the circumstances, He is with us when we let go of our own will and trust in His word.

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so—and times when I think I am alone show me so. Amen.

Brad Griffin - Camper, Father of campers, local committee member

Trim your sail and turn your ship around to the Lord.

Day 11 • March 19, 2011

On Growing Up

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. - Ephesians 4: 7-13

I am not quite thirty yet. I'm getting closer every day. My knees don't work like they should. I find more and more grey hair every week. But last week, I felt ancient. I ran into a former camper. A camper I taught to sail on her very first tacking drill when she was 10.

She just graduated from college.

Ouch.

We all grow up. We can't help it. It is just what we do. Without trying, without thought, without effort, we get older. But Paul tells us that we also have to grow up spiritually. In fact, he promises us that God has given us gifts of grace that will aide us in the process of growing up into the full stature of Jesus Christ.

That's something we have to work at, though. Growing up spiritually is something that we do prayerfully and cognitively. To grow into the FULL stature of Christ, we must be Focused on God's desires for our life, Unified in authentic community, Learning from Scripture, and Living our faith out by serving others and sharing the good news.

What steps would be helpful for you to take this Lenten season to help you grow up in one of those areas? Do you need to find a bible study or small group? Do you need to invest some of your gifts and resources in a mission project? Do you need to clear some distractions out of your life so you can hear God's voice.?

What do you need to grow up?

God, help me to follow you more and more every day. Help me grow in faith and love. Amen.

Owen Barrow - Camper 1988-1998; Staff 1999-2004; LIT Coordinator 2003

March 20, 2011 • Day 12

Finding Family

“We love because he first loved us.” - 1 John 4:19

This was my first year on staff and I was so excited to get my information packet in the mail telling me I got the job of Health Care Coordinator. Holding this position required First Aid, CPR, and lifeguard certification in addition to Wilderness First Aid.

Driving down River Road in torrential rain the day before training began was the first time I had been down that road in almost six years. When I checked in, for the first time ever coming to Don Lee, I did not know a single person there; every summer for six years I went to camp with my best friend. No one would ever describe me as “outgoing” by any means so being put in a situation where I did not know anyone was very difficult for me and put me far out of my comfort zone.

My roommate, Jennifer, was one of the first people I met and one of the people who made a significant effort to get to know me and make me feel like I belonged there. Unless we were in the classroom, I did not really get to see Jennifer because by the time she got back from other training, I was already asleep – it was just nice to know that someone was there who cared about me and had my best interest at heart. Despite the fact that I did not get to know her that well during those two days of wilderness training, over the course of the summer she became one of my closest friends and I am so blessed that she is in my life.

I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to come back to Camp Don Lee and have the best job I have ever had. After the completion of staff training and two months of working at the best place on earth, I have met some of the most wonderful people in my entire life. These individuals are some of my closest friends and are the people I trust the most. I love every person in the Don Lee family – because that is exactly what we are – a family.

God, thank you for my family, at home and at camp. Amen.

Hillary Srsic - Camper 1999-2004, Staff 2010

You go from port to port ...

Day 13 • March 21, 2011

Teach me to Pray

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.” - Luke 11:1-4

You know when you are trying to get your kids tucked in at night, and just when you think they are asleep, one of them asks a question. A deep probing question. A question that you just cannot answer in one sentence.

One night, after spending a good two hours trying, in vain, to convince a group of eight 10-year-old boys to quiet down, I resorted to the most boring story I knew. I figured if my little-girl-planting-a-seed-and-learning-to-pray story couldn't woo them to sleep, nothing would. As I rounded the final verse of the story, I heard that beautiful sound of heavy sleep-breathing that cannot be faked. I thought for sure, I had them. Out cold.

But as I moved my feet across the permanently sandy concrete floor, I heard one of the boys stir. “Can you teach me to pray,” he asked.

The depth, yet simplicity, of that question caught me off guard then, and it does now. The disciples asked Jesus the same question—Lord, teach us to pray. In fact, it's the only time I can recall them asking him to teach them anything. And Jesus' response matches the question. It is simple and deep—both at the same time.

Prayer always seems hard to me, but really it's quite simple: Our Father in heaven, holy is your name. Simple. The depth comes from what we bring to the prayer—our hearts. And, the one we bring our hearts to—our heavenly Father. Read the Lord's Prayer again for the first time. And if it has been a while since you have really prayed. Just do it. It's quite simple.

God, teach us to pray. Remind us of your love and desire for us to spend time with you. Amen.

Owen Barrow - Camper 1988-1998; Staff 1999-2004; LIT Coordinator 2003

March 22, 2011 • Day 14

Grace Upon Grace

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . . And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. - John 1:14, 16

The grace of God is an incredible thing. As John Newton reminded us in his famous hymn, it truly is amazing; it is amazing in ways innumerable and unfathomable. There are certainly those happenings in our lives when we experience God's grace in dramatic and spectacular fashion. And those times are important. They are times that we never forget. Yet, far more often it is God's subtle grace that touches us. Sometimes that grace is so subtle that the sensitivity of our awareness must be very finely tuned for us to even notice. There are indeed those constant things that God gives us – those graces upon graces – that require our keen sensitivity so as not to take them for granted or to miss them entirely.

Camp Don Lee is a very special place; it is absolutely “a place that God has blessed.” Even that hallmark description carries with it a message ever so subtle. There are other places that God has blessed. The reality is that ALL of creation is a revelation from God. However, even here in this revelation from God that we love so much, it can be so easy amidst all the extreme excitement of the camp community to miss and thus fail to appreciate the subtle graces continuously bestowed at this very special place of blessing.

Therefore – slow down for a moment. Take a look around. Sit on the beach just before dawn's first light. Notice the first glimpse of the early morning sun. See those first rays break across the ripples in the Neuse. Watch the darkness as it becomes dispelled – at first gradually and then suddenly – by the power of God's new light. Hear the birds praise their Creator for a new day. When the evening comes, have a seat on the end of the pier. Take the time to just listen. Hear the wind and the waves. Feel the breeze. Watch the stars sparkle. Experience something divine. For that is exactly what it is – something divine. We often find ways to miss the divine. While we are looking so hard for the dramatic acts of God, He is all around us infusing our lives with grace upon grace. And we miss it. That is, until we allow ourselves to become aware. And then we begin experiencing the grace of God in a new and dramatic subtle way. We then come to realize that the subtle can be the most powerful of all. For the hand of God is at work all the time. His still, small voice is perpetual throughout all of His created order. The whisper of God never ceases. That's how God for now has chosen most often to do His work.

Remember that the greatest act of divine intervention was one of the most subtle actions in the history of the universe: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God Almighty, the Creator and constant Sustainer of everything that is, quietly put on a human body and entered His creation to live among us, and to die and rise again for us, His creatures. How amazing – and subtle. During this Lenten season, be especially aware: our lives are constantly filled with grace upon grace from the One whose greatest desire of all is that we truly live.

God, remind us of your grace every day. Amen.

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

... and still your search goes on

Day 15 • March 23, 2011

Finding God's Time

**There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

My first memory of Camp Don Lee was standing on the shore line (long before the rock wall) looking out over the expanse of the Neuse River and thinking this was some place special. We were dropping off my oldest sister. Two more sisters later, and it was my turn. It was never a matter of if I would go, it was simply a matter of how soon would I be old enough. The Christian fellowship became a huge influence in my life that stays with me today.

Nearly 40 years later and I still have friends I met at Don Lee. I met my husband there. He proposed on the porch of the sailing hut. I insisted John Farmer marry us. Life happened. We got divorced and I felt like I lost my place at Don Lee in the process. It was devastating and I was hurt and angry about it for a very long time.

Funny how God works sometimes. Turns out I had the right man all along, but my timing was off. We remarried nearly seven years ago. He brought me back to Don Lee and helped heal a lot of old wounds.

Every time I stand on the beach looking out over the Neuse River, I am reminded of how blessed I am to be a part of the Don Lee family and all that means to so many people who have experienced it.

God, thank you for your gifts in your time. Amen.

Emily Baker Everett - Camper 1972-1979; Staff 1981-1983; Local Committee 2010-present

March 24, 2011 • Day 16

All Are Welcome

**Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me
welcomes the one who sent me. - Matthew 10:40**

In recent years, I have found myself questioning my faith greatly. As I listen to self-professed Christians on television as they discuss everything from politics to gay rights, I find it disturbing that people of my faith seem to be so intolerant of everyone and everything. It makes me question whether or not I believe the word Christian means what I thought it did.

Thinking back on my days at Camp Don Lee, one of the things that stood out in my mind was the Christian attitude of inclusion for all. Everyone was made to feel welcome and part of the family. I find that still to be true when I come back to visit. When you drive through those gates, everyone is still the same way – embracing each other for who we are, not who someone else thinks we should be.

I'm learning to trust in my own beliefs and that my faith is indeed strong. I don't necessarily have to agree with what I'm hearing "preached" to me by others.

God, thank you for your message of welcome. Help me to love as you have loved. Amen.

Eugene Everett - Staff 1980-1987; Local Committee 2009-present

Hoping that you'll find your way

Day 17 • March 25, 2011

A Place of Peace

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” - Luke 24:36

The water sprays across my brow, the breeze tosses my hair, the sand crunches between my toes, and the cross of my Savior beckons me to the end of the pier ... peace is with me.

Every year, for the past 31 years of my 32-year-old life I have been fortunate enough to be a part of Camp Don Lee. As a matter of fact, I can remember camp as far back as I can remember. When I was about 2 to 4 years old at family camp, I can remember waking up all drenched with sweat from a nap in a cabin that was one tiny room, big enough to fit two bunk beds in with a couple of feet between them, with windows only at the top rim of the ceiling of the cabin, leaving little to no air to sweep throughout the cabin. If I can remember correctly, it was placed smack in the middle of camp in the thick of the trees – the area that now hosts the “chapel” building. I had been so worn out from the food, fun, and fellowship that I couldn’t even remember where I was upon waking. Then the hot air, wooden walls, and my mom rubbing me with a wet washcloth, brought me back to reality and, ironically, peace had returned.I was at camp.

Camp Don Lee has been a refuge of solace and peace throughout the entirety of my life, even at the mere thought of Camp Don Lee I feel refreshed, renewed, invigorated by its offerings of solitude, family, and God’s overwhelming presence.

During my college career, in a Bible Study, the leader of the study asked us to visualize a place that brought us the most peace, solitude, and serenity. Then they asked us to envision those people who brought us the most peace, love, strength, and sense of safety ... to establish a vision of God’s safety net for me. Guess what location and body of people came to mind, automatically as if God was just waiting for my brain to realize it was already there?! The riverfront of Don-Lee and the family that I have come to know there enveloped my mind with no reservation ... and to this day they still remain my fortress of solitude and strength in times of celebration, fear, anxiety, joy, and peace ... God has truly blessed us with its creation and existence. Trim your sails and turn your ship to the Lord.

God, thank you for your peace. Remind us that we are safe in your arms. Amen.

Joy Boling Moffett - Family Camper 1979-present...never missed a summer yet!

March 26, 2011 • Day 18

The Warmth of Two

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? - Ecclesiastes 4:9-11

I am writing this devotion not for your spiritual edification, but plainly and simply to make fun of my dearest friend. While many will know him because of his stellar good looks and sharp mind. While others may remember him because he used to sport a sweet pair of coke-bottle glasses and bowl cut. I will always do my best to help people remember the time his scrawny-no-meat-on-the-bones body was overcome with hypothermia on one of our many adventures up the Neuse to Croatan.

The story gets told and retold in many different ways, but if there is one thing that everyone should know, it is that I saved his life. We shared an Ecclesiastes moment together.

What a gift friends are. Even camp friends that you only saw once a year in the summer for a few weeks. We need each other. To keep warm. To keep sane. To keep on keeping on.

Why don’t you call someone you haven’t talked to in a while. Maybe a camp friend. Make fun of their glasses and haircut. Tell old stories. Even if you only talk to them once a year in the summer. You need them. And maybe right now, they need you.

God, remind us to laugh together. Remind us to love one another. And most of all, remind us to warm our hearts among the company of your children. Amen.

Owen Barrow - Camper 1988-1998; Staff 1999-2004; LIT Coordinator 2003

But loneliness and tears are all you'll ever find

Day 19 • March 27, 2011

You're real, aren't you?

Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. - 1 Peter 5:7

How could I ever forget Lisa? When I first met her, she was in her own little world. She was all alone, even in the middle of the group. She was withdrawn. She seemed to have no esteem whatsoever. She would barely say a word to anyone. Yet, despite all that seemed to be so wrong, there was something very special about her. For the occasional fleeting moment that she wasn't looking down at the ground, I could glimpse something in her eyes. There was life there somewhere; it was deeply hidden behind the wall of silence and separation that she had built, but it was there. I just knew it. I could tell.

For the rest of that day and at least the next, my co-counselor Elaine and I tried everything we could think of to connect with Lisa. Nothing seemed to happen. Now, Lisa wasn't a problem for us. She was well behaved. She participated in all the activities. She helped with the capers. She did everything that Elaine and I asked of her – that is, except talk to us. I remember praying to the Lord one night in my cabin. I asked God for two things: to not let me give up trying, and to enable the perseverance to pay off. The next morning my group had the table setting detail at the dining hall. The boys and I got there first and began to set out the plates and silverware. The next thing I knew I felt two small arms wrap around me from behind. I turned around and it was Lisa. Without a word, she clung to me for what seemed like a long time, and then let go and joined the rest of the group in finishing off the tables. Though she didn't talk to me, I thanked God in my heart. I knew that He was at work. (After breakfast, Elaine told me that she had received a similar hug before the girls arrived at the dining hall.)

Later that day, at lunch time, our group hiked out to Shark's Tooth Point for a fine meal of Ms. Gatlin's spam sandwiches (even though we had requested PBJ's). As usual, Lisa took her food and wandered slightly away from the group by herself. From a distance, I watched as she struggled with her spam. Since I too was engaged in the same struggle myself, I took that as an opportunity to walk over to her and sit down on the sand beside her. My plan was to commiserate with her. But, before I could say anything about the sandwiches, Lisa spoke up. She said, "You and Elaine are real, aren't you?" Not exactly sure how to respond, I remember chuckling to myself and saying something profound like, "I think so." My words brought a wry smile to Lisa's face. It was the first time that I had seen her smile since she had arrived at camp. Not wanting to miss a potential breakthrough moment, I asked her what she meant by calling us "real." She said, "You really care about us, don't you?" I assured her that we, of course, really cared. Apparently she believed me, for then she began to talk to me. It's astounding sometimes the kind of heavy stuff that kids carry around with them. She had been abused in some way by her father or step-father and apparently had been removed from the home. She had subsequently been shuttled through a series of foster homes and was about to be moved again. She had not been a happy kid and came to Camp Don-Lee expecting not to be a happy camper. For this young fifth grader, nothing had been real – at least not until now. She was beginning to realize that, despite everything, she was actually significant. For the rest of the week, Lisa stopped looking at the ground all the time. She began slowly but surely breaking out of her shell. She became more and more like the other kids in the group. In fact, by the end of the week, she had become one of the more lively ones. On Saturday morning, as she was getting ready to leave with who I think was a social worker, through teary eyes Lisa thanked me for taking the time to care and told me that she wished Elaine and I would adopt her. (She was serious.) Afterwards, I received several letters from her; in each of them she wrote that she was doing well. It's truly amazing what God can do through us when we are willing to take the time to care about another person when we have the opportunity. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for His unending care for us!

God, thank you for caring for us. Amen.

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

Until your captain is the Lord

March 28, 2011 • Day 20

Acting on Faith

But someone may say, "You have faith, and I have actions." Show me your faith without any actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions. - James 2:18

I LOVE Facebook, and I keep up with lots of friends that way. One day, a friend wrote "Why do I get myself in over my head? I'm only 5'6"... not getting any "taller"... what makes me think I can hang out in the deep end of the pool of life?" My comment, "You walk in the deep end of the pool because you have faith!"

There are many scriptures in the Bible referring to faith or being faithful. They start in Genesis and recur throughout the Old and New Testaments. One of my favorites is the focus scripture from the book of James. I interpret this scripture to mean that faith must be accompanied by action. Abraham, Moses, Noah, Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Daniel, and Sarah are but a few examples that come to mind when I think of people who not only believed but also had faith. Yes, these people were chosen by God Himself for their faith and given specific instructions and while they could have chosen to do nothing, they ACTED and it was in that action that their faith was EVIDENT! This IS walking in the deep end. If you believe you have the skills and abilities to captain a boat, it is not until you trim your sails and head into the wind that you SHOW your faith and trust in those beliefs. This is an empowering realization.

So, how did the Facebook thread end? My friend posted that "Maybe it is the place of our friends to point these things out to us!" It was really sweet of her to say that; I appreciate it and I'm really glad I acted faithfully to remind her where she gets her strength. We all have opportunities to witness. Many of us ignore those opportunities and don't act on our beliefs because we are afraid of what others will say about us or think of us or we simply don't take the time. I encourage you to LOOK for these opportunities and EMBRACE them as a chance to ACT on your own faith and be a witness to God's awesome power and love. We may not have confidence in ourselves, but God does and God gives us both opportunity and grace to trim the sails.

God, give me the courage to act on my faith, not just believe. Show me your grace daily. Amen.

Dayne Harrison

Day 21 • March 29, 2011

Time Flies

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. - Philippians 1:3

Time passes by so quickly. Perhaps it is a gift that we do not recognize this fact until we get older and are able to see all the time and experiences that we have lived through. I vividly remember being 11 and 12 years old and looking forward to going back to camp during the summer. It seemed to take FOREVER for the week to arrive. I have such wonderful memories of my time working at camp, and the excitement that I would feel as I eagerly waited for summer to begin so I could make my way back to Pamlico County and hear the familiar “Whoomp, whoomp!”, as my tires rolled over the bridge and down the dirt road. Time appeared to move so slowly as the days and months were long leading up to my time at camp. However, the summer months seemed to fly by.

Now I wait with my children to see when the new camp registration booklets will come out, as my daughter eagerly awaits signing up for another week of activities with her buddy. I see her face light up when we start to talk about picking out her week. For her the days sometimes move slowly, as I now look back more than 20 years to find the first summer I worked at camp, and 30 years to remember my first year as a camper. Even after all that time I am thankful for the friendships I have made (and continue to have) as a result of being at camp.

While the time seems to move faster now as birthdays and holidays come around with surprising speed, I am reminded at how slowly time moved in anticipation of being back at Don Lee. And although a lot of time has passed for me since my first experiences there, one thing remains constant, and that is the relationships and memories of that place are incredibly powerful. In this season of Lent, I hope we all can view God’s sacrifice with the same anticipation and appreciation.

I am thankful that I have been allowed to spend so much time at Don Lee, thankful for the people I met and the relationships that were formed. I can only hope that my children will find the same shelter and meaning from being there as well.so far, so good.

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us a place that you have blessed. Let us be thankful for all that Camp Don Lee has meant in our lives, and for the people we have met during those experiences. Help us to appreciate all that you have given us, and all that you have sacrificed for us.

Scott Glass - Camper 1978-1981; Staff 1987, 1989-1991, 1993-1996; Parent of camper 2010

March 30, 2011 • Day 22

Bound Together

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

A summer staff member told me a story that happened while she was student teaching at a middle school in Greenville. She walked into a social studies class she would be helping with for the year, and she began to look around the room at her new students. She examined their faces. Some had looks of excitement, others with the classic middle school gaze of boredom. She hoped her own youth and excitement for teaching would significantly improve those with the glazed-over looks.

But as her eyes scanned the room, she noticed something about one of her students. One girl appeared to have a circle of rope around her right ankle. Her eyes stopped.

“No one else puts rope around their ankles,” she thought. She knew she had spotted a Don Lee kid.

I’m not sure how long this has been a tradition, but I remember eyeing rope anklets a lot when I first arrived at Don Lee in the summer of 2009. I asked about it, and a staff member explained to me that many groups celebrate their time together by going to the Sail Loft and creating rope anklets. Often the experience is signified by a special color or design of rope, bought specially for that group by one of its staffers.

I had the privilege to be a part of the Coast Runners camp in 2010, and we commemorated our trip experience with a rope anklet. I felt I had arrived.

Camp is a special experience. The community formed in the camp setting is unmatched, and the memories are unforgettable. When parents are concerned about their child going to camp without a “buddy,” I tell them how almost every member of my wedding party was a camp friend, not a friend from home.

There is a bond formed each time someone experiences the camp community. For Camp Don Lee, rope anklets have become a symbol of that bond.

As we experience the Lenten journey, living in the darkness, taking time for self-examination and preparation for the great moment of reconciliation with God in the Easter celebration, I am reminded of those rope anklets. They represent a special experience of God’s grace with fellow children of God in a place that God has blessed.

At camp, it’s easy to see one another as beautiful God-creations; but we must take the blessedness we feel on this sandy soil back onto the paved road and into the rest of our relationships.

Lent is a time for examination, so take this time to examine your relationships – family, friends, coworkers – are any of those bonds a little frayed? Have they begun to come undone? Ask God to be in the midst of those relationships, cover them in prayer, and take the next steps toward healing.

Gracious and loving God, who calls us to relationship with Yourself daily, grant that we may mend and strengthen our relationships with our friends, family, and all Your children. It is in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Melissa Cooper - Faith Formation and Retreat Ministries Coordinator 2009-present

Sail on, Sailor, till you find what it is you're lookin' for

Day 23 • March 31, 2011

Free Gifts

Colossians 1:9-14

The Greek word for grace used by Paul and other writers of the New Testament is the word “charis.” In fact, the Greek word for any kind of gift or present given or received is also charis. Thinking about grace with that background in mind, grace is best described as a gift from God, a free gift. Camp Don Lee has been a source of God’s gifts for me over the course of my three summers on staff. There is no place I have ever seen where God’s gift of a sunrise is more beautiful than the sunrises I have watched coming up over the river after a night of sleeping on the pier. I have never lived in a place where I could see the stars quite so well, and I have never done anything where I felt as much at peace as I do when sailing quietly in gentle breezes down the Neuse.

Not everything at camp is easy, but even the trials that we face as staff members have helped me to find new gifts from God. During my first summer on staff I was blessed with a very spirited group of tweekers who managed to push my patience to new limits. For two weeks, I felt like the kids would leave camp having learned nothing because they never stopped talking long enough to pay attention. The last night of camp, one of my girls came to me and asked to borrow my Bible so she could start reading. I sat on the porch and read with her late into the night. Even though I never got my Bible back, God blessed me with the gift of his presence in that moment, which is a gift I have been carrying with me ever since.

God, thank you for the gifts you have given us. Pour your grace on us daily. Amen.

Sarah Nickens - Summer Staff 2006-2008

April 1, 2011 • Day 24

Water and Wait

He has made everything beautiful in its time. - Ecclesiastes 3:11

After sharing our Thanksgiving meal this year, my mother-in-law, Gaynelle Glass, who many of you know and love, gave each family an amaryllis bulb. We stood in the kitchen together and unwrapped the bulbs, brown and peeling, their roots gnarled and knotted. We nestled them in the peat that was provided and took the plants home. We followed the instructions to water them and wait. Now, in my bathroom stands a 2 foot tall stalk with a red blossom poised to unfurl. Though it appeared lifeless, hidden in this bulb was this beautiful possibility – we simply needed to have faith to add a little water and to wait.

I am grateful for all those people in my life who have seen beyond my imperfections – who have “watered” me along the way. My family and friends who have forgiven, a husband who has overlooked and children who will hopefully not remember everything. We could no doubt all make a list of people in our lives who have believed in us and whose faith in us has helped us to blossom. Many of you, as I, have been “watered” along the shores of the Neuse at Camp Don Lee.

So often we are quick to judge and forget to look deeper beyond our first impression, to see the beauty in others. During this season of Lent, let us remember the beauty God sees in us and in others if we will only “water and wait” for him to reveal it to us.

Lord, remind me that you love each person I see today enough that you sent your son to die for him. Help me to look beyond outward appearances and open my eyes to the tenderness and beauty you see in each of us.

Bonnie Glass - Counselor, LIT Coordinator 1989-1991

Trim your sail and turn your ship around to the Lord.

Day 25 • April 2, 2011

Wear the Right Clothing

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” - Colossians 3:12

I attended family camp with our two children while my wife Christy was studying abroad. This was our first time to family camp. . . i.e. we had a lot to learn! As God would have it, we shared a cabin with a family that has been attending family camp for three generations. This family took me and the kids under their wings and showed us an amazing amount of kindness. This family was a great blessing to us as they showed us how things worked at camp and shared stories with us about prior family camps they have attended. The grandmother of their family was so kind to our children and made all of us feel so welcome. I was reminded of God’s instruction to us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, which is what that family did for us. God was watching over us and shared His love and grace through that wonderful family.

God, continue to clothe us with your love, grace, and compassion. Amen.

Brian Becker - Camper 2009

April 3, 2011 • Day 26

Standing on Holy Ground

Put the shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is holy. - Joshua 5:15

If you have an old fashioned paper map or have “googled” one, following the spidery paths to Camp Don Lee looks as if it lies at the end of things. It doesn’t. For many people it is a beginning. On the edge of land, below fluorescent skies and beside a nervous river-- not all is still waters-- the camp, for decades, has opened to wanderers and staff new visions. Memories have been filled with faces of new friends, summer showers, taut sails, arching camp fires and the laughter of a moment that lasts a life time.

Don Lee did not just happen. It has been in the mind of God since the beginning. This time the United Methodists got it right. Don Lee has grown as slowly as green moss. Strong and soft voices have debated and decided again and again the course of its future. It continues to ask its visitors questions. What does this mean to me? The fellow camper with a loud mouth you discover is as deep and committed as the pine tree roots along the shore to the things you too know. The hallelujah light of morning has traveled across the blue green ocean to bring sunrise again. The muffled crack of far away lightening has awakened again the sense of great power and glory out there somewhere. And in your heart, you know things are different for your having been here, once and again you have been blessed.

In the city warrens of Winston-Salem, Raleigh, Wilmington, or Fayetteville, or anywhere along the broad land now called North Carolina, in the traffic jams, bank lobbies, and amid noisy roommates, in the midst of a history test in red brick or gray stone buildings, or shopping in grocery store aisles-- for a brief moment you can find a splendid calm by calling upon the Don Lee legacy. You gain strength for the living. And you know that God is good.

In ancient biblical times, sites where human goodness, bravery, mercy, discovery, and grace had occurred, the Hebrews labeled holy places. An act of honor included removing one’s shoes in that place. Have you ever noticed the number of bare feet at Camp?

God, remind us that all your earth is holy. Remind us to walk with care in your Creation. Amen.

Henry C. Ferrell, Jr. - father, father-in-law and grandfather of campers & staff spanning 1968-2008

And when you find his love ...

Day 27 • April 4, 2011

The Beaver Dam

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

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. When we made the final turn to see 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 eleven 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 site 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.

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 the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen

Keith Cannon - Family Camper; Camper; Staff Member; Local Committee

April 5, 2011 • Day 28

Enduring Love

“For his steadfast love endures forever” - Psalm 136

Family Camp was a short-lived tradition at our house, but nothing has ever been more important to us. It is the ministry that opened my heart to Jesus, and opened my eyes to see the opportunities in my life to serve God. It is the ministry that put faith at the center of our family relationship.

After several years of attending Family Camp as a Father & Son duo, I went to Family Camp by myself year before last. My son was away for the summer pursuing other interests, and I couldn’t bear to spend an entire summer without seeing Sailor Sam and my dear friends.

It was not easy to go to Family Camp alone. But I knew without a doubt that my Don Lee friends would be there to welcome me with warm smiles and kind Christian greetings. My friends didn’t let me down. In the true welcoming spirit that belongs to Family Camp, I fit right in as a Family of One.

The Adult Bible class that year was about prayer practices. We briefly discussed corporate prayer, and intercessory prayer, but it was contemplative prayer we focused on.

The class discussed how to slow down in this hurry-up world we live in. Prayer is being in God’s presence. One of the first scriptures that came up in discussion was Psalm 46:10 -- Be still, and know that I am God.

The sound of God issilence. Stay still for a whiledoingnothing.....

At the Saturday morning service at Vesper Dale, John referred to Psalm 24 --- seek the face of God. Sometimes God’s presence comes in unexpected ways. It was a quiet, reverent service, and Rev. John baptized Cole Branham.

After that service was over, I went out on the beach at the east end of camp. I was hurting inside. So I stretched out on the beach, closed my eyes, and justdid.....nothing. Within minutes, the only thing I could hear was the waves. And I mean I really heard that sound as a gift from God. The waves kept coming, just like God’s steadfast love. It was comforting, re-assuring, and peaceful. I felt the warmth of a loving God and everything was all right. Tears flowed. I knew that through silence I had truly come into God’s presence – a faith revelation. God touched my heart.

In Psalm 136 we find the phrase “for his steadfast love endures forever” a total of 26 times. The truth of Psalm 36 came to me through faith and trust in God, and through the contemplative prayer practice I learned that week.

Here’s what John Wesley had to say: “The peace of God . . . is an unspeakable calmness and serenity of spirit, a tranquility in the blood of Christ, which keeps the souls of believers, in their latest hour, even as a garrison keeps a city.”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Kevin Seymour - Camp Don Lee Committee

... you'll have no more to fear

Day 29 • April 6, 2011

Light in the Darkness

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” - John 8:12

In the summer of 2009, I had the opportunity to be a Sailing Support Staff for second session Mariners. Our trips were something for the record book, you name and it went wrong. One trip in particular will forever have changed my faith in God.

We set out on Hobie Cats, with light winds from the west and a clear forecast to the east and temperatures quickly rising, a perfect combination for fierce summer afternoon storms. One thunderstorm in particular left our group “limping” with ripped sails, sinking boats and a spun prop on the Jesse James. After assessing our damages, the decision was made to head back to Camp in hopes of beating the quickly approaching nightfall.

Jesse went ahead of the Hobies to switch out with the Final D. After the swap and meeting back up with the group, the sun was just a sliver on the horizon. With all of the Hobies finally on our towline we pointed the bow of the Final D to where we thought Camp was. However, with no moon and a thick fog creeping along the river, light and landmarks were few and far between.

After struggling to set a course through the darkness of the night, I closed my eyes and did the only thing I knew to do. I prayed. I prayed for strength, for knowledge, and a sign to lead us safely back to Camp.

After praying I opened my eyes, and looked up to the sky. There it was -- a single shooting star. At first, I did not believe what I had just seen. I dismissed it as a coincidence. But there it was again, and again. Three shooting stars in a row -- not a coincidence. I trusted them, which was not an easy thing to do when I had 23 other people depending on me for safe passage. I turned the bow of the Final D towards the shooting stars and followed them.

After about 45 minutes of travel and 18 shooting stars later, we were docking to the end of the pier safe and sound.

Trusting in God is not the easiest thing to do. Seeing God and his signs is even harder. But take the risk, follow that shooting star and have faith that “He and His stars will be your guide.” That He will safely lead you back to port when you are lost and don’t know where to do, all it takes is a small prayer for great things to happen.

God, remind us to trust you, even when there seems to be no light. Amen.

Sam Mackey - Camper 1998-2006; Staff 2007-2010

April 7, 2011 • Day 30

There are no orphans of God

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. - John 14:15-23

We are born with a deep innate fear of being left alone. You know that feeling, that gnawing pit in your stomach. Maybe from childhood, maybe from last week. We all know it.

There are few remedies for this feeling of isolation. There are few antidotes for homesickness. But when you are a counselor, you’ll try anything. One week, I actually cured a case with an old smelly t-shirt. I gave it to a kid under the guise that my dad gave it to me so that I would always know that he was with me. Victory!

Jesus actually encountered the same problem with his disciples. As Jesus began to unfold the days to come in John’s farewell discourse, his followers feel that lump in their throats begin to sink down into their gut. But Jesus makes them a promise that is far more than a guise. He promises the gift of the Holy Spirit with the words, “I will never leave you orphaned.”

The presence of the Holy Spirit among us means that we are never alone. In the darkest places, in the most broken moments, God is with us. When we are experiencing isolation and disappointment, God is with us. When we are sin-sick and sorrow-worn, God is with us. Thanks be to Christ that he has not left us orphaned.

God, thank you for your ever-present care for us. Remind us today that you are with us and we are never alone. Amen.

Owen Barrow - Camper 1988-1998; Staff 1999-2004; LIT Coordinator 2003

He and his stars will be your guide

Day 31 • April 8, 2011

Talk with Jesus

Pray without ceasing. - 1 Thessalonians 5:17

When I think back over my summers spent at Camp Don Lee, I am saddened by the fact that I will not ever be able to fully explain its impact on my life. I have had innumerable uplifting experiences there as a camper and more recently as a staff member. I believe that every person needs and deserves such a place to feel so connected to God. That is the ultimate reason that Camp Don Lee has been so important to me.

Just like the campers I interact with, I find myself sometimes feeling undeserving of love. In life we too often put ourselves down and let others put us down as well. We find ourselves at points where we no longer feel worthy of being cared for. Our ultimate hope is in Jesus Christ. He knows our pain all too well and longs for us to know Him. Through knowing Him personally, we can always feel loved in this complicated world that drags us down. That important fact is easy for me to remember while I'm working with children at Camp Don Lee during the summers.

However, I find it difficult to always remember that in my daily life. One great way to remind myself is to talk with Jesus. Just by talking with Him I can feel that power and that breathtaking experience that I always find so easily at Camp Don Lee. And I pray that by talking with Him and knowing Him, you too can experience that connection. Remember that no matter where you walk, Jesus is your ultimate source for strength.

There is a great power in knowing that you can be supplied with as much strength as you need from the Source who has it to spare aplenty. This is the same Source who endured a crucifixion. This is the same Source who carries my sin and yours on His shoulders. So ask Him for guidance. Pray for extra strength even when you think you've got enough. Our God is our best friend, our father, and our advisor. Feel the power of His grace through your faith in Him. He walks with you wherever you go.

I pray that you feel the same Camp Don Lee experience no matter where God leads you. Take it with you – there is enough to go around.

“Sin hath left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow.” - Elvina Hall, “Jesus Paid it All”

God, remind us to talk with you daily and to take you wherever we go. Amen.

Leah Godfrey - Former Summer Staff

April 9, 2011 • Day 32

A Place that God has Blessed

The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” - Matthew 8:27

I began going to Camp in the mid to late eighties. The things that I specifically remember are sailing in the river, swimming in the pool (landing a perfect $\frac{3}{4}$ gainer on my stomach), canoeing in the creek, sleeping on the pier, camping at Perry, the food, and Scott Glass' way cool do-rag. However, as I grew older, especially into my teens, I started to notice something much different about Camp. I noticed that when I left Camp, I yearned for a fulfillment that I could only receive the following year at Camp. This happened for a couple of years. I would get home from Camp, and I was missing something, only to be refilled when I returned to Camp the following year. As I matured and sought what I was missing, I realized that Camp was the first place in my life that I felt the presence of God.

The sun on my back, the wind in my face, the warmth in my body, the sunrise over the river, the stars ... oh the stars ... the Milky Way Galaxy, the constellations, celestial navigation, and the countless shooting stars we'd see at night on the pier. However, it was a much different situation that led me to know for sure that the presence of God is felt at Camp Don Lee. I was working at Camp my first year as a Sailing Staff Trainee in the summer of 1996. The summer had gone very well. All children were accounted for and food was as good as ever. In Mid-July Hurricane Bertha came on the horizon. Specifically moving all larger boats back into Gatlin Creek, removed all Sunfish, Aquafish, Zumas and Hobies to higher ground and secured them, and double anchored all the keel boats. We sat back and hoped for the best.

Now my memory gets foggy, because Bertha was not the only Hurricane that came onto the North Carolina coast that year. Hurricane Fran also came ashore in August of 1996. The aftermath of these hurricanes left Camp in pretty rough shape. Countless trees were down, Flying Scots were in the marsh, a keel boat had sunk, and the pier was nonexistent. Even in the aftermath of one of the most destructive forces of nature, the cross was still standing tall attached to a piling at the end of what used to be the pier.

Dear Lord, thank you the creation of the earth and heavens. Thank for showing yourself to us in your creations. Please help us to seek out those places that you are evident, and be with us in those places where you may not be as evident.

Meador Harris

He'll take the helm from you, together you will sail ...

Day 33 • April 10, 2011

God's Purpose

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose. - Romans 8:28**

While attending family camp with our two children while my wife Christy was studying abroad, one of my fingers got infected. By the time I started to pay attention to the infection, a blister had formed that was very painful. Unfortunately, it was time to lance the large and painful blister with a needle, which is not at the top of the list of things I enjoy doing. I was sitting on one of the picnic tables outside the dining hall with our daughter who was holding my hand as I got ready to jab my finger with a needle...for the third time! A family at the picnic table next to us was watching this scenario develop and asked if they could help.

"It just so happened" (i.e. God was at work), the man at the table next to us was a physician and knew just what to do. He walked me over to Camp Director John Farmer's office and treated my wound with items from the camp's first aid kit. I felt like the lion in the children's story that had the thorn removed from his foot! The doctor also called a local pharmacy for an antibiotic prescription. Then, one of his friends at the camp skipped dinner so he could drive me to the pharmacy ... while their families took care of our children while I was gone.

I was amazed at their graciousness and servant hearts and humbled by God's love and meeting of my need at that time. I was reminded of God's promise that in all things, He will indeed work for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. God used an infected finger to reveal the blessing of kindness and grace that He can pour out through people who are willing to serve others in need.

God, thank you for the people you place in our lives who work for your greater purposes. Amen.

By Brian Becker - Camper 2009

April 11, 2011 • Day 34

There is a River

Psalm 46

This psalm was one to which I frequently returned as a counselor—especially in working with older groups, where frantic schedules, classes, and other preparations, along with the stresses of small-group life's togetherness, can exact a toll on camper and staffer alike. It remains a favorite because it affirms God's presence in the midst of turmoil (verses 1-3), yet does not shy away from the reality of trouble and ugliness (6-9). Out of this whirlwind, the author gives us a divine pronouncement: "Be still, and know that I am God" (10). It is no coincidence that through the middle of the psalm we learn that "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God" (4).

"There is a river" remains a powerful reassurance. Many friends had their own rituals for leaving at the end of summer, yet nearly all included some quiet, still moment of reflection by the riverside. For several years I kept a jar of Neuse River water on my desk as a memento that there is a river.

Much like Camp, Lent is an opportunity for reflection, for simplicity and doing without. It may seem odd to equate the HOLAHEE with penitential exercise, yet consider the stories you hear, the ones you tell. For how many people does CDL Base remain a sacred space for renewal and reorientation? When else have we sung praise for a sandy PBJ and warm Kool Aid? When else do we cheer enthusiastically for the privilege of performing menial chores? How can eleven windless hours on a boat in hundred-degree heat become the greatest experience of our lives? Jonathan Harris and I used to joke about enjoying "the simple things." We were wiser than we suspected. Can we ever live so simply again?

This Lenten season, as we remember that there is a river, remember too to be still, to know that God is God. May this stillness that pervades Camp Don Lee--an active place--dwell within our own activity all of our days.

God, thank you for the Neuse River. Thank you for the peace we find there. Amen.

Cooper Harriss - Camper 1983-84, 1988-90; LIT 1991; Counselor, etc. 1992-1997, 1999; LIT Coordinator 1996-97, 2000; Summer Program Coordinator 2003

... over oceans deep and wide

Day 35 • April 12, 2011

Full Sail up the River

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. - Proverbs 3:5-6

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 out post near Oriental, where I had spent the weekend with my Twecker 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.

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 - Family Camper; Camper; Staff Member; Local Committee

April 13, 2011 • Day 36

Let us Rejoice and Be Glad

This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. - Psalm 118:24

Camp Don Lee with Farmer John at the helm has touched us all in many ways. John always had a way of talking to us that usually either gave us the answer we needed or at least caused us to ask ourselves a few more questions to get us to where we could figure it on our own.

As I get older I realize one of the most important things that I took away from my camp experience was that John always ended our morning vespers with Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Over the past few years, I've discovered that I recite this Psalm in a variety of situations. Initially, I used this in response to a difficult situation, event or person and it was more or less used in a sarcastic matter on my part without much real thought or effort. However, it started to have a calming effect on my overall attitude at the time and made the situation seem rather benign in the overall aspect of my life.

Over time, I began to try and use it more often in the day. The drive to and from work became pretty standard. Prior to going to bed, I would take a minute and reflect on it and ask myself did I really try and live my day in a way that was in honor of God and his grace.

Things came full circle for me this past August, when my wife, Cathy, gave birth to Audrey, our fourth child. I think after going through the first three births, I was really able to relax and actually experience this one without being distracted by all the other things that are going on in the room during the birth of a child. After the first few minutes or so of Audrey's life, I was finally holding on to another one of God's many blessing I have received and I quietly recited: "This is the day which the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Never has there been a moment in my life that this Psalm was more appropriate!

As we go through the ups and downs that life will throw at us each day, let us try to remember that each day is a gift from God, God is always with us and we can and should rejoice and be glad for every day God has made for us.

God, let us rejoice in every day and be thankful that you have made it. Amen.

Kevin Mason - 7 years at Don Lee (1990-97)

Sail on, Sailor, till you find what it is you're lookin' for

Day 37 • April 14, 2011

Where's the Grace?

**Do not ... encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Defender is strong;
He will take up their case against you. - Proverbs 23:10-11**

**...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing
greatness of knowing Christ... - Philippians 3:8**

In the Children's Home in Morelia, Mexico where I am currently working, I sometimes feel confused or angry with God when I reflect on His grace. One day, I finally asked Him, "How could You, being omnipotent, allow these precious children to be forgotten?! Where's the grace?!?"

Since then, God has begun to reveal to me His great love for these children. First, He reminded me that He relinquished some of His power to us when He decided that we would have free will. Yes, He can (and does) save children from desperate situations, but He will not go back on His decree that we are free, and thus, that the parents of these children who made terribly grave decisions are free to make those decisions. Instead, He works through those people who have decided to surrender their freedom to His will. God uses these surrendered people as His hands and feet to care for those in need.

Then I realized that I was one that God was using, that He had been refining me "for such a time as this." I believe He used my time at camp to prepare me for the Casa. I can't count the number of times I have used a camp game, gotten the children quiet with a 'camp method,' or sung the kids a camp song. The children's favorite is one I sing every night before they go to bed...most of you know without me saying...Yes, it's 'Lay Down, My Dear Sisters'. When I look back, I am amazed by how God orchestrated circumstances to prepare me for and send me to the Casa. To what great lengths He went to bring these children a little more love!

As I daily experience impatience, frustration or anger with the children and staff of the Casa, I am humbled and reminded that only by God's grace am I among those who have surrendered their will to Him. Take time today to praise God for His great grace and ask Him to help you surrender your comforts, plans and desires to His will so that you may be used to spread His grace to others.

God, thank you for your grace in my life. Help me surrender to you in all I do. Amen.

Lauren Bruton - Camper, LIT 2002, Staff

April 15, 2011 • Day 38

Neuse River Winds

Even the winds and seas obey Him! - Matthew 8:27

There is nothing quite like the Neuse River wind. It is constant in the fact it is always changing! Sometimes it is light for days. Sometimes it is blowing like a hurricane. I tell folks all the time if you don't like the wind wait ten minutes and it will probably change for you.

On one of these quick wind change events came a few summers ago when a full blow with a wicked dark front moved our way across the river. Watching the weather as it approached, I saw a sailboat across towards Oriental leaning sideways with full sails. I began to pray for the safety of the occupants of that boat. The wind left as fast as it came.

Later that same day my daughter came from working at CDL across the river to see mom and dad and I shared with her about the wind and the boat and my prayer and the fear of disaster for the sailors I had felt. She said she could relate with my fears with a sly grin and confessed she, Perry and other staff were on that same boat. She confessed she had hoped dad wasn't looking out across the river at them on that boat. She knows her dad and his constant concern for her.

I learned two good lessons from this incident. The winds of change come quickly and we need to be anchored in our faith so we can withstand the enemy with the One who controls the "wind and waves." We are called to be intercessors in prayer for our brothers and sisters. Sometimes we may not know it, but the ones we are praying for may be our own! As we are sure the Neuse River winds will blow so we can be assured God's Grace can't always be visibly seen but it is always there for his children. Be instant in prayer! The winds of the Neuse are blowin'!

God, help us to look to you when the winds change. Amen.

Mark Bruton, parent of CDL camper and staff

Trim your sail and turn your ship around to the Lord.

Day 39 • April 16, 2011

Sail on, Sailor

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. - 1 Corinthians 12:27

“Sail on Sailor” is a song that is synonymous with Camp Don Lee. We sing it joyfully in vesper services on the banks of the Neuse, in worship services in the CLC, and as we’re riding down the road just thinking of camp. We sing it at communion, at celebrations, when we say goodbye. The words have great meaning for us and touch us in ways that others may not really understand.

Today we gathered as Don Lee family to celebrate the life of Steve Van Hook, who was a vital part of Camp Don Lee for many many years. At the close of the service Amy Edwards played the piano and sang “Sail on Sailor.” As she started to play the introduction to the song, the Don Lee family members in the chapel (and there were many of us!), immediately recognized the tune and were visibly moved by the song choice. As Amy began to sing “Sailing over the ocean, in search of life’s mysteries,” the most amazing thing began to happen. Throughout the chapel, very softly, others began to sing along with her. “Torn by tears and fears, forgotten dreams, rusty old memories.” More voices joined in singing quietly along with Amy’s beautiful voice. It was our Don Lee family singing, for others would not know the words to the song. No one had invited the congregation to join in with the singing, it just happened. At that moment we came together and did what we always do – we supported each other. At that moment, the song that is synonymous with Camp Don Lee became symbolic of our sense of community. It was our way of coming together as a community by sharing something very familiar and meaningful as we supported each other in saying goodbye to one of our own. It was symbolic of what we do. We support each other. No one had to invite us to sing along with Amy, it just happened. We sang together, united by the common bond as “Don Lee family,” and we supported each other.

“Sail on sailor, till you find what it is you’re lookin’ for. Trim your sail and turn your ship around to the Lord.”

God, thank you for my family. Help me to continue to support everyone in the amazing community that is Camp Don Lee. Amen.

Phyllis Whitley Williams – Former camper and staff member; Mother of staff member; Local Committee Member; “Don Lee family” member

April 17, 2011 • Day 40

Determination

**As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven,
Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. - Luke 9:51**

I will never forget her face. In an expression that looked like she couldn’t decide whether to burst into tears or break something out of frustration, we sat in the motor boat watching her fail over and over again to rescue the buoy. It was a simple task that she had performed one hundred times before, but could simply not master on this day. But the look of determination on her face let us all know one thing:

She would not give up; she would die trying.

In Luke 9:51 the gospel story reaches a turning point. No longer is Jesus wandering aimlessly around the Galilee, but now, he has set his face like a flint. This is a prophetic stance of determination (Isaiah 50:7) to complete one’s goal. And here, Jesus is determined to make it to Jerusalem where he will accomplish his exodus—leading all of us into freedom from slavery to sin and death through his new covenant.

There are two disciples standing there as he discusses this Exodus on the mountain of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah. They know that Jesus has been sent to bring God’s peace to the world, to restore shalom beginning in Jerusalem. They instinctively know that this journey will not be easy—that confronting the powers that be comes with certain risks. But the look of determination on his face lets us all know one thing:

He will not give up; he will die trying.

God, thank you for not giving up on us. Amen.

Owen Barrow - Camper 1988-1998; Staff 1999-2004; LIT Coordinator 2003

We’re sailin’ over the ocean of praise

Day 41 • April 18, 2011

God Surrounds Us

Psalm 139:7-12

When Europeans first began colonizing these beautiful states, they did so with the idea that wilderness was a danger to our health and a waste of our space. Nature was destroyed in an effort to alleviate people from the dangers of the unknown. Over time however, people began to see value in nature as a way to transcend from someone who is consumed by the pressures of everyday life, to a person who can grow closer to God through nature. Nature was no longer a dark mystery to avoid, but rather an opportunity to escape and enlighten oneself in God's beautiful creation.

Perhaps what these early colonists learned hundreds of years ago is truer than ever today. We get so caught up in our day to day lives that we lose sight of the creation on this planet that God has blessed us with. Often during the extremes of winter, the walk from the house to the car is about all the outdoors we can take. It is during these time that I like to think back to my summers at Camp Don Lee.

I can remember sitting around the campfire with my LIT group. We each spoke about the pressures back at home. Each one of us confessed that when it came to our relationship with Christ, it was often Camp Don Lee that kept us steadfast in times of chaos. We recalled monumental moments at camp that stick with us throughout the year. The list of memories went on for hours, and now, having worked four years on staff I can think of even more to add. Sitting under the cross at the end of the pier on a starry night; worship at Vesper Dale; the sound of waves crashing against the bow of a Sunfish; the dew on the grass in the morning between the staff house and Vesper Dale; thunderstorms with campers on the water; canoe trips to the beaver dam; walking under the pines from the sail loft to the dining hall for lunch; still wind in the mornings, and crazy wind in the afternoons; jellyfish; a 21 hour trip (two days) against the current to Cape Lookout with '06 Mariners; a three hour trip to Cape Lookout carried by current with '07 LITs; and late nights at the sail loft, perched next to the dagger boards facing the water, when the wind is gentle, the stars are illuminated, and the water is at peace.

These moments were often peaceful. Watching a thunderstorm roll down the river when campers are safely ashore gave the entire camp a chance to take a deep breath and enjoy God's creation. These moments were just as often stressful. On our way home from Cape Lookout, one of my campers says, "Hey Justin! Look! A funnel cloud!" It's amazing how the moments that may have kept you awake in the night are the very memories that put you to sleep years later. Moments that in retrospect give you comfort because God was so obviously with you the whole time.

I think it is in nature, and at Camp that God has us surrounded. We are forced to learn how to forfeit control of the moment. God communicates with us in ways that we are forced to listen. We trim our sails toward his path because the beauty of nature proves to us just how much he loves us. In nature we are burned by his sun, wet by his water, and moved by his wind. At the end of the day it's enough to put a smile on our face and maybe even a tear to our eye, because through it all we find ourselves closer to the Lord than ever before.

Thank you, Camp Don Lee, for bringing me closer to God.

God, thank you for being all around us. Help us to realize you are everywhere. Amen.

Justin Shepard – LIT 2004; Staff 2005-2008; Camper forever

April 19, 2011 • Day 42

Out of the Fishbowl

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. - Philippians 2:4

Growing up as a preacher's kid, I began my life in a fishbowl. No -- not the kind that my Betta fish, Bonhoefer, lives within, but more of a metaphorical bowl of life with theologically filled waters. When I sailed into the collegiate lands of academia, I had no idea my fishbowl waters were about to be tipped overboard into the Neuse River of coastal North Carolina.

As 2010 began to fly by from my studies in Spain to my travels throughout the Midwest of the United States, life seemed to suddenly halt on the day I arrived at Camp Don Lee. I had never in my entire life been to Camp Don Lee -- I grew up going to music camp where my free time was spent in the practice rooms and my electives were divided up between master classes and music theory. However, a good friend recommended that I check it out and said I would be a great fit as a camp counselor. I applied, signed my contract and then arrived at Don Lee.

The night before getting to camp I had just pulled into my parents' driveway after months of traveling and I was exhausted! I drove onto the graveled Don Lee driveway the next morning grumpy and thinking "what have I gotten myself into?" Philippians 2:4 says, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." I was drained for sure, but decided the best way to wake up would be to fully immerse myself into the waters of Camp Don Lee. So, I jumped in.

Best summer of my life! I not only worked with incredible kids all summer, but I grew hand in hand with the beautiful staff at Don Lee. While my contract as a 2010 Summer Counselor with Camp Don Lee has long ended, I feel like there was a spiritually-filled contract that allows me to keep up my duties year-round. From the comfort I provided my Tweeker when she ended her first relationship to the "future letters to yourself" that I mailed to my all-girls group after they wrote them months ago to the weekly hang out sessions I have with my fellow staffers -- I am still living in this community!

Dear God, please allow us the fully immerse ourselves into life! The truth is, Lord, we are at our best when we are able to be in community with others -- the community of Camp Don Lee is a part of the Body of Christ. While Camp Don Lee has forever sequined our hearts with memories of sweet summertime, help us to be able to let this community still shine bright in our hearts throughout the year and this Lenten season. Amen.

Meredith Faggart - Summer Staff 2010

Our captain is the Ancient of Days

Day 43 • April 20, 2011

All God's Children

Matthew 5:43-45

“Can I talk to you?”

Oh dear, I thought to myself; summoning up the last reserves of energy I had left. The camper requesting my listening ears was one who had been giving me trouble all week – she was never blatantly disrespectful, but used inappropriate language to get the attention of the boys in her group and was embroiled in a conflict with another female camper (who was apparently her best friend from home). I tried to be as patient as possible with her, but at every turn she seemed to evade connecting with me. And now she wanted to talk to me – alone. I had no idea what was going to happen next.

I led her into an office in the fellowship hall where we were out of earshot but could still be seen and waited for her to talk.

“I feel like I’m doing something wrong.”

You think? It was easy to slip into a sarcastic tone after a week of having to play the disciplinarian. I started to empathize with my mother.

“What do you mean?”

“Everyone was talking at vespers about how they experience God... and I’ve never felt anything like that. I don’t feel him in the waves, or in the woods, or when I’m singing. I feel like when everyone else is talking about God, they’re speaking a different language. I don’t go to church back home – I just don’t get it.”

This was hard for me to respond to. I was one of the people who felt God with her while she was walking through the woods; who believed that music was part of her intimate, personal relationship with her Creator.

“Hmm... I don’t think it means you’re doing anything wrong. Everyone experiences God in a different way – that’s what’s so cool about Him. He’s everywhere.”

This seemed to ease her worries slightly, and we talked a bit more about how she could find a church back home. I promised to help her in any way I could and told her that she could find me on Facebook to keep in touch. The next words out of her mouth hit me like a ton of bricks:

“Thank you. You’re the only one I could trust.”

I was shocked. I, who had been nagging her all week to clean up her act, was the only staff member she felt she could trust? It dawned on me that I had been judging her the whole time, and I felt so ashamed. I didn’t expect that she would be able to trust or connect to any of us, and so I wasn’t ready when she did. But she knew, and God knew, that I was the right person for the job. I thanked God for the opportunity I had been given to let Him work through me to make someone feel loved and listened to.

That camper and countless others taught me again and again that the light of God is in all of us. We are all His children, and we should treat each other like that truth is etched on our hearts.

God, thank you for making me your child. Help me love my brothers and sisters. Amen.

Sarah B. Harlow - Summer Staff 2010

April 21, 2011 • Day 44

The Heart of a Counselor

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. - 1 John 4:16

I have been coming to Camp Don Lee for nine years now. In my time there I have made friends that will last a lifetime, looked up to my counselors like they were superheroes, and even had a few dozen kids of my own. The experiences that I have had at Don Lee have doubtlessly shaped my life as well as my personality; one could say that I was raised there. Although Camp Don Lee has always meant the world to me, I feel as if I could only really appreciate it fully after I became a counselor, bringing my experiences there full circle.

I recall my first week as a counselor this past summer of 2010, which was possibly one of the most trying weeks of my life. I am not entirely sure that I ever have been so exhausted, both physically and mentally, as I was in those first few days. A particular moment that sticks out in my memory from that week was of me sitting in the counselor room of cabin 6 on an hour off early on in the week. As I lay on my bed, grateful for that moment of stillness which can be so rare during the summer, I thought of nothing but my campers. Although the groups of children which I had only really known for two of three days were perfectly safe and taken care of by my more than capable co counselor, I couldn’t get them out of my head. I wondered about their wellbeing, their safety, and even how much fun they were having. I am not entirely sure what I was expecting when I decided to become a counselor, but after just a few short days in my new position I had already become overwhelmed with instinctive “counselor senses” that I didn’t even know existed.

Throughout the entire summer I became used to these feelings. I always had campers in my care and they were always on my mind. It is a good way to spend a summer! However, what was really amazing was that I finally knew how all of my counselors felt when I was younger. As a camper, you can never really understand what it is like to be the one person that you look up to more than anything in the world: a counselor. As a counselor however, I was finally able to realize that in all of my years as a camper, although I was away from home and my family, I always had someone caring for and about me, no matter what. This knowledge made me feel special and it made me feel loved, which is how every camper should feel.

The Camper/Counselor relationship at Camp Don Lee has always been amazing to me. The fact that everyone, no matter their background, can come to camp and be surrounded in love and care is a beautiful thing. I said earlier that I, like so many others, was practically raised at Don Lee, and to be raised in a place like that is to be raised in God’s love. I believe that the ability for us to care for each other the way we do at camp is one of God’s greatest gifts, likewise, many of the people that I have encountered at Don Lee have been some of my most spectacular blessings. Out of everywhere I have been, God’s love seems to be the most evident and abundant at Camp Don Lee, and it truly is amazing.

God, help us to care for everyone we meet, at camp, at home, and in the world. Amen.

Mason “Fuzz” Williams - Camper 2003-2007; LIT 2008; Summer staff 2008-2010

Yes, we're sailin' over the ocean of praise

Day 45 • April 22, 2011

Become What You Believe

As Jesus left the house, he was followed by two blind men crying out. “Mercy, Son of David! Mercy on us!” When Jesus got home, the blind men went in with Him, Jesus said to them “do you really believe I can do this?” They said, “Why, yes, Master!” He touched their eyes and said, “Become what you believe.” It happened! They saw. - Matthew 9:27-29 (The Message)

Over the years of teaching and introducing hundreds of people to the activity of sailing, I have learned one thing that separates those who learn sailing quickly from those who struggle. It seems that knowing where to sit, how to hold the sheet line, understanding the tiller, and even knowing the best knots is not enough. Sailors I have found are those people who understand about relationship.

In sailing it is about the relationship to the wind. Everything relates to the wind direction when we are sailing. Starboard or port tack; windward or leeward side of the boat; beam reach or close hauled all are determined by the relationship to the wind. One afternoon I remember working with a young woman in one of the adult sailing schools. She was having great difficulty in her efforts to learn to sail. I would hold lightly on the tiller just behind her hand and we would “point up” or “fall off” and she would end up going in a circle. I would gently adjust her course and again and again point out our relationship to where the wind was coming from. She just could not get that abstract condition of the wind. There were no real reference points on the water. No yellow lines or markers along the side. As we moved along everything seemed to change. Sometimes the wind itself would shift slightly.

Then I thought about that passage, “Become what you believe!” This woman I had learned was on a long and eventful faith walk. She had learned to discern God’s voice for her life. She spent time daily in prayer and connected to her spiritual hungers. As I began to ask her more about that part of her life she became more and more comfortable with these very familiar images and thoughts. She shared moments of feeling the presence of God and hearing God speak to her. I then told her that we sang a song at camp that had the phrase in the lyric that says, “Trim your sail, and turn your ship to the Lord.” It seems like it was only a short while and this woman had found the wind and had discovered her “eyesight.” I am not exactly sure what happened for her that afternoon. For so many of us it is all about relationship. Relationship to Jesus Christ. When we are aware of God moving and working around and among us it becomes so much easier to become what we believe.

Lent is a great time to notice the movement of God and to hear His call on our life. When we believe that God is acting and moving and when we believe God has a plan for giving His love to the world; then it only follows that we become what we believe.

God, help us to not only believe, but to become that belief. Help us to regain our vision through you. Amen.

Rev. John A Farmer - Director at Don Lee Center since 1977

April 23, 2011 • Day 46

Finding My Strength

Romans 12:4-8

There are so many reasons I love camp. It’s a part of me, something that will never stop influencing who I am and the choices I make. God has worked so powerfully in my life through Camp Don Lee, and I’m so grateful to be a part of the camp community. It’s hard for me to pick one specific memory that has had a particular impact on me. It is really looking back on the collection of experiences camp has given me that allows me to see how God has been working.

Through the years, my camp experiences have shown me the strengths that God has given me, strengths that I never would have discovered if I hadn’t been pushed outside my self-placed limits. I think it is the community, most of all, that has helped to teach me who I am, who God is, and what He might have in store for my life. This is a community that believes in you enough to push you outside your own box. This is a family of people that sees you at your best, uplifting your strengths, but also sees you at your worst, and loves you anyway. I have experienced the power that kind of community has for my own life, and I have been privileged to be a part of the effect it has on the lives of so many kids. This is a place they are free to be themselves, where they are part of something bigger, and have a support system to count on—even if just for the summer, even if just for a week, this has such a lasting impact on a kid’s life.

As a counselor, I loved seeing my kids come together to overcome group challenges and support each other. As head counselor this past summer, I loved seeing each counselor’s strengths come out as the weeks went by. It is the kind of growth that you don’t even realize is happening when you’re in it. You realize it when you think back on who you were at the beginning of the week, at the beginning of the summer. You learn that these people you didn’t even know can become infinitely important to you. You learn that with a group of people supporting you and with God’s help, you are capable of so much more than you ever thought possible.

The verse above always reminds me of the strength and spirit of the camp community, as well as the way we should continue to live our lives and serve one another outside of camp.

Lord, thank you so much for the blessing of the Camp Don Lee community. Thank you for the gifts you have given every person as an individual and valuable part of your family. Help us to remember in all of life’s situations that we are a part of something greater in you.

Emily Newman - Staff 2004-2010

The Spirit is blowin’ our way

Day 47 • April 24, 2011

New Creations

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come. - 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

Stephen was a kid from a troubled background. I remember the look on his face and his demeanor when I first saw him that Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1982. The last place on this Earth that he wanted to be was Camp Don Lee. And he didn't mind one bit letting me, my roommate Kevin, and all of the other fifteen guys in our cabin know about it.

For the first couple of days that week, it was a difficult situation. He was antagonistic. He was smart mouthed. He didn't want to participate. Kevin and I watched him like a hawk. But, as time began to pass, Stephen began to realize that we really did care about him. When he stepped out of line, we were firm – but not harsh. He saw that when we read the Bible at our vespers devotions and sang songs about Jesus, we really seemed to believe what we read and sang about.

One day after lunch, during the time that was intended to be naptime, Stephen came into my room and wanted to talk. He began to open up and share things about his life. As I listened, I realized that this mere child had been through things that no child should ever have to experience – physical and verbal abuse, a prostitute mom, a missing dad. It was no wonder that he wore anger and bitterness like a garment. That day, however, something began to change; I could see and feel that toughness that had long since been his protection begin to soften. Stephen was starting to trust. He was beginning to realize that he did not need to protect himself from me – or the rest of the Camp Don-Lee community. He told me that he had never seen anything like this place, had never met people like us, and that he never wanted to leave. For the rest of the week, Stephen was a different kid. He laughed. He played. He joked. He lived. Oh – and he heard a lot about Jesus.

On Friday night, while the rest of the camp was in the fellowship hall dancing to Eugene's records, Stephen asked me to walk with him out on the pier. When we got to the end, he told me that he had heard so much that week about the love of Christ. He wanted me to pray with him; he said he wanted that love for himself. He said that since he was leaving the next day, he might not ever get the chance again. I was so blessed that night. God had allowed me to be a part of an eternal moment. As the evening waves beat against the jetty, I had the honor and privilege of leading Stephen to Jesus Christ. The next morning as he was about to get on a bus to leave, Stephen the kid clung to me like there was no tomorrow and we both cried. Yes, there were tears of pain because I didn't want him to leave either. But, there were also tears of joy. For by the saving grace of God in Christ, Stephen was a new creation. I have not seen Stephen again since that Saturday over twenty-eight years ago. I have often wondered about him. There will however be a tomorrow. Thanks to Jesus, there is always a tomorrow in the Kingdom of God.

God, thank you for your Son. Thank you for the story of Jesus and the hope you give us. Amen.

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

Yes, the Spirit is blowin' our way

