

Ninnescah News



Connecting with Camp

By Olivia Bartel

It's a real stinker not to have youth camps this summer, but Camp Mennoscah is here for every one of you.

We give you permission to grieve the loss of this summer and not being at camp with your friends. Take some time to miss playing in the river and sleeping in the top bunk in the cabin. Remember the bell ringing to wake you up and the campfire at the end of the day. These are some of the parts of camp we will miss this year.

For those who were to have their first or last summer at Camp Mennoscah, that's hard. You can be angry about not having camp. You can be sad, too. We hear you.

Take your time and when you're ready, join us for the next step. Ready?

We refuse to be in the dumps! Camp Mennoscah came up with a couple of options to bring camp to campers of all ages.

The Camp in a Box is filled with all sorts of items brainstormed by the weekly program directors, summer staff, and board of directors. It will be filled with a 2020 tee shirt, name tag, a typical camp week schedule, camp stickers, devotionals, nature fun, friendship bracelet and

lanyard materials, a couple of camp recipes, sidewalk chalk, and a variety of other activities and crafts.

Anna, Beth, Ethan, Karina, Kyle, Sarah and Seth will create videos of typical camp activities like ringing the bell, campfire, and scraper skits. They'll come up with crafts and activities for campers to share with their families and to challenge camp friends. All of their ideas and videos will be posted on the Camp Mennoscah webpage and the Facebook page.

Finally, there's the ever-classic camp tee shirt. The 2020 tee reads, "River Play. Campfire. Follow Jesus." Only a limited number of tee shirts are available, but with enough demand, we'll reorder.

It's like a Choose Your Own Adventure—you choose how you want to "have camp" this summer. Pick a tee shirt. Watch some videos. Convince your family to come to Camp Mennoscah for an outing. Spend some time with your devotionals and Bible.

Whatever you choose, Camp Mennoscah will be here, waiting with great anticipation to share God's love and peace when you return to this sacred space.

This Summer at Camp Mennoscah

We are accepting reservations for small groups to visit Camp Mennoscah. Following state and local guidance, some changes have been made to the facility use guidelines. Should guidelines change, we will update the information. Please note the following:

- All guests should maintain a distance of six feet from other guests and not mingle with other groups using Camp Mennoscah.
- The Whale playground and swings are not available due to the difficulty in disinfecting surfaces.
- The sports equipment shed and the fishing shed will be closed. Please bring your own recreational equipment.
- Facilities will be cleaned and disinfected by camp staff after each group.
- The pool is not available.

Family Weekend
Intergenerational weekend
July 18-19

Young Adult Weekend
Ages 18 and older
July 31-Aug 2

Annual Meeting
Supper provided, all welcome
September 27

For more information on these events or to register,
click "Retreats" under the Programs heading at campmennoscah.org

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Camp Cancellation

By Michael Unruh

At the end of April, the very difficult decision was made to cancel summer youth camps because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We knew that sadness and disappointment would follow, because we ourselves have been experiencing those emotions. Before canceling altogether, we considered several options: delaying the start of the summer, shortening camp weeks, limiting the maximum camper number, canceling June camps only, and preventing travel from high-risk areas. We looked at daily/weekly procedures to make in-person camp work. We considered strict enforcement of the 6-foot rule, an impossibility in camp lodging facilities. In the end, each option continued to present risks that camp leadership were not



comfortable taking to move forward. With camper and staff safety being our top concern, having in-person camps was not the responsible decision for 2020. We hope this summer is the last time this decision needs to be made.

In the weeks since announcing in-person summer camp cancellation, we have heard expressions of support, disappointment, and requests to reconsider. We want you to know that those comments were heard and understood. Camp Mennoscah, as a place and as a community, is special, and not being able to be at camp with God's creation and fellow campers is tough. In the upcoming weeks and months, camp staff and volunteers will be working hard to connect with as many campers as possible in different ways, some of which are described in this newsletter. We can't wait to gather together in person as a camp community, whenever that may be. We will be ready to have you back when that time comes!

Opportunities to Support Camp Mennoscah's Mission!

Summer 2020 is going to look different at Camp Mennoscah. Campers will not be arriving each Sunday. The bell will not be ringing to signal the start of a busy, activity-filled day. Lively children and youth will not fill the dining hall to develop relationships with one another through conversations and mealtime fun.

But, in the midst of these changes comes continued opportunity to support the mission of Camp Mennoscah, and you can help!

- Making a general fund gift will directly support materials and ideas for **connecting with campers** missing out on an in-person camp experience this summer.
- Making a general fund gift sustains camp staff and camp operations **so that camp will be ready and available as a space to gather** once it's safe to do so.

If you are in the financial position to give, this summer is the perfect time to make a gift to Camp Mennoscah! Here are some ways:

- **Cash gift:** This helps right away, and the CARES Act provides an additional deduction up to \$300 for gifts to non-profits like camp, for those not itemizing deductions in 2020.
- **Qualified Charitable Distribution:** Though the federal government has suspended the Required Minimum Distribution for 2020, you can still give a QCD this year.
- **Donor Advised Fund:** If you already have a donor advised fund set up, consider making an extra gift to camp in this unique, challenging year.
- **Consider other planned gifts:** Commodities like grain, Charitable Gift Annuities, and including Camp Mennoscah in estate plans are all ways to share your support of Camp Mennoscah and could also have financial advantages for you, both now and in the future.



Please consider creative ways you can help ensure that campers will be able to develop their faith at Camp Mennoscah this summer and in years to come! If you have questions about giving options, please contact Executive Director Michael Unruh at 620-382-6560 or michael.unruh@campmennoscah.org.

Valiant Volunteer: Renetta Kroeker

By Wilmar Harder

“Sometimes the best medicine is giving a hug and showing love to the kids,” declared long-time Camp Mennoscah nurse Renetta Kroeker. When she was in 7th grade, Renetta wrote an essay about wanting to be a nurse and later fulfilled her dream with 50 years of nursing. As a life-long member of Buhler Mennonite Church she grew up attending Camp Mennoscah and fondly remembered crossing the river for Bible study under the trees on the west bank.

Recalling all her good camping memories, Renetta answered a request from Mennoscah for summer camp nurses. After one week, she did not miss a summer of camp for the next 20 years (except one year when they had enough nurses and she cooked). “It’s being with the people when they need you the most that is most rewarding,” Renetta shared. She remembers the late nights dispensing meds, campers falling out of bunks, campers with low blood sugar, and many other smaller ailments. “Come on, boys!” she exclaimed before she told me about two male counselors who got into a friendly shaving cream fight and ended up in the Kingman hospital with burning eyes.



Renetta anticipated the relaxing and rejuvenating atmosphere at camp. She loves that Camp Mennoscah gets kids into Creation, to see what God has done for them, and to let them express and be themselves.

Three generations of Kroekers have attended Camp Mennoscah. When asked about her great grandchildren, Renetta replied, “We’ll see... let’s hope so.” And although

she has retired from camp nursing, she lamented that “we won’t get to go to Camp this year.” Renetta hopes to continue volunteering in the kitchen when campers return.

A big “THANK YOU” to Renetta for helping make the ministry of Camp Mennoscah a success!

A Broader Perspective On Life Without Summer Camps

By Michael Unruh

Over the past year, Camp Mennoscah staff and board have been sitting with the uncomfortable reality that Indigenous people from the Comanche, Wichita, and Osage once lived on the land where camp now sits, and they were at one time removed from the land...not by choice.

According to Indigenous author Randy Woodley, Indigenous people are place-oriented, which means they “seem to be more bound to a *real place* and understand it as a basis for their identity. When place-oriented people are removed from meaningful place...they have great difficulty adjusting.”¹



The prospect of not coming to Camp Mennoscah for summer camps disappointing and it may even feel hurtful. Memories and relationships have been made in a space

considered to be sacred. However, as we process our feelings of loss, here are a few of the stark differences between *one summer* without in-person camps and the *permanence* of identity loss Indigenous people have experienced with loss of land:

For most of us, our identities are primarily formed by experiences and people. Identities for Indigenous people are more commonly formed in places.

Camp community is also largely based on relationships and experiences, which can be maintained regardless of place. Indigenous people are continually striving to maintain community despite loss of land, culture, way of life, and identity. Threats to these aspects of Indigenous identity continue even to this day.

If someone were to refuse to leave Camp Mennoscah, they would not be met with violence and forcibly removed, as Indigenous people were from their land.

At some point in time, we will be able to return to camp. Indigenous people are not able to continue their ways of life on the land that holds their identity.

As we go through a new experience of loss this summer, let us also be aware of the greater, permanent losses Indigenous people have faced and are still facing today. We invite you to think with us about ways all of us can recognize Indigenous relationships to the land where Camp Mennoscah exists and work toward right relationships with Indigenous communities.

1. Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*, (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012).



Camp Mennoscah

PO Box 65
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Camp Wish List

Camp Mennoscah may not be having summer camps but we are working at keeping camp ready for you! Thank you for your generosity in supporting camp ministry!

- .095 Trimmer line (for weed eater)
- Movers dollies (two 18" x 30" dollies)
- Garden loppers (six pairs: to trim trails)
- Hatchet (two: for popcorn kindling and to trim trails)
- Painter's tape
- Foldable sawhorses (2 sets)
- Bungee cords (various sizes)
- ACDelco Heavy Duty Twin Hammer 1/2" Air Impact Wrench ANI402
- Bar chain oil (for chain saw)
- Advanced strength duct tape
(stronger than general use)

Additional items are listed on our website.

2020 Summer Staff: Favorite Camp Song



"Zephaniah 3:17, it helped me a lot when it seemed like everything in my life was going wrong, it gave me hope that someone was there to help me out."
-Kyle Flickinger



"Zephaniah 3:17, we end every day with it during the summer. It reminds me that I'm not alone and it makes me feel calm and loved."
-Anna Lubbers



"The Banana Song, it was the first camp song that I learned all the words to and I love singing it faster."
-Seth Rudeen



"All God's Critters, it's a good message."
-Beth Balzer

"Unity, it brings me peace no matter what's going on. I sing it in my head or hum it out and I instantly feel like I'm back at campfire under the stars."
Karina Brandt



"This Little Light of Mine, it has a great message to it and who doesn't like saying whoopie-doo-dee-doo-dee-dooos!"
-Ethan Entz



"Zephaniah 3:17, I remember ending campfires singing that song and looking up to the sky at all the stars and just feeling a connection with God."
-Sarah Booth



www.campmennoscah.org

