

Let the Children Come:  
A History of Camp, Ministry, and Lakeview



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*This project is for all those at Camp Lakeview past, present, and future*

*And to all those camp friendships that remain undying...*



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## Introduction

Where did over two thousand youth between the ages of five and eighteen decide to spend a week or weekend during the summer of 2018? These children and young adults ventured out into nature to spend some time amongst the trees at Lakeview Ministries, formerly known as Camp Lakeview.<sup>1</sup> Their chosen venue was a small, Lutheran summer camp nestled in the forested hills of South Central Indiana. This camp can be found about fourteen miles northwest of Seymour and is located within a Lutheran community that resides on the banks of Lutheran Lake.<sup>2</sup> The scenic and secluded setting of this camp has provided camp-goers an escape from the realities of everyday life for over fifty years. Over the course of its existence, Lakeview has also attempted “to provide a Christian experience of growth, inspiration, and recreation, for people of all ages through a year-round outdoor ministry.”<sup>3</sup>

Lakeview was created in 1965 as an outdoor ministry that actively sought to engage the world around them. An outdoor ministry, as defined by the Christian Conference and Camping Association (CCCCA), is “an experience within a temporary community using the outdoor setting and trained leaders to meet spiritual objectives.”<sup>4</sup> The first outdoor



Figure 1: Sign pointing the way to Lakeview, 1967 (Courtesy of Lakeview Ministries)

<sup>1</sup> “2010-2018 Final Camper Numbers,” 2018, Folder 1, Camp Lakeview Papers 1962-2018, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Lutherans, as referred to in this paper, encompass those associated with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). There are other branches of Lutherans that participate in outdoor ministries, but Camp Lakeview is tied directly to the LCMS, so it is the denomination that is focused upon in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Lakeview Ministries, “Camp Lakeview History,” lakeviewministries.com, <https://www.lakeviewministries.com/about/>.

<sup>4</sup> Rob Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry as Experiential Laboratory for Spiritual Transformation and Leadership Development,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 145.

ministries emerged during the last couple decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, alongside the phenomena of summer camping. Many of these earliest summer camps were designed as antimodern havens, where campers were sent to escape the modern world. Over time, these antimodern sentiments were incorporated into an “alternate space” or a countermodern philosophy that viewed camps as a natural extension of the modern world. These complex conversations regarding camp’s place within the broader world guided the overall mission of summer camps throughout their history. In a similar way, Lakeview’s creation was impacted by those conversations that came before, yet in the end Lakeview’s mission was unique because it stressed a distinctly Lutheran view on service to the world.

Camp Lakeview’s founders articulated their mission right from the beginning, as they sought to foster “Christian leadership, Christian fellowship through recreation, and Christian growth and experience,” in the youth that came to camp.<sup>5</sup> Those who founded Lakeview aimed to do this by creating a removed experience for Christian growth, by designing an educational and recreational arena for fellowship, and by preparing these youth for a greater Christian service to the world. In doing this, they attempted to shape the childhood experiences of those who ventured to camp, while still getting them ready for their return to the “real world.” Lakeview’s history then serves as an example of how Lutherans used the secluded summer camp environment as a way to actively engage Lutheran youth during a time that was rife with cultural warfare.

### **Historical Background**

During the summer of 1880, Reverend George W. Hinckley took some of his parish’s boys out to an island near Wakefield, Rhode Island. During their excursion into nature, these

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<sup>5</sup> “Oct. 30, 1962 Meeting,” Minute Book of the South Central Lutheran Camp Association of Indiana, Inc., 1962-1970, Lakeview Ministries Archives (hereafter cited as Minutes, Lutheran Camp Association).



youth engaged in outdoor recreation, religious services, and even an evening campfire. Their time away in the woods would serve as an important marker in the histories of both summer camps and outdoor ministry, as Michael Smith cited it as “the first camp-like experience based on a church youth group.”<sup>6</sup> From these humble roots, the idea of Christian camping or outdoor ministry would spread across the United States and Canada throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Camp Lakeview would eventually be founded in the early 1960s as a descendant of Hinckley’s ventures into nature.

Summer camps in America have a history that stretches back to the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as many historians cite the 1870s and 1880s as the official beginning of the organized summer camp movement. Many of the first summer camps were privately owned and were designed to host the children of upper-class, well-to-do families. These private summer camps were very sparse during the first thirty years, as there were only twenty or so private camps in operation by 1900, with most of them located in the northeast region of America.<sup>7</sup> Right from the beginning though, Christians inserted themselves into this movement and Hinckley’s trips into nature were followed with more defined attempts to create summer camp experiences for Christian youth.

Camp Chocuroa was one of the most important of these early camps and its founder, Ernest Balch, was one of the pioneers of organized summer camping. The camp environment he created was a testing ground for his own ideas of education and an escape from the “evils of life in high society” for the campers. Along with his focus on education, Balch was called a “deeply religious man” and most of the boys that stayed at the camp were from Episcopal schools in the

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Smith, “‘The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper,’ and the Nature of the Summer Camp,” *Environmental History*, 11, no. 1 (January 2006): 75.

<sup>7</sup> Sharon Wall, *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1925-1955*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 9.

region. These boys participated in activities that promoted nature, capitalism, and religion during their stay at Balch's camp.<sup>8</sup> The activities that these boys engaged in were meant to remedy the perceived ills and corruption of the modern world and the urban environment. Between 1881 and 1888, Camp Chocuroa was one of a growing number of Christian-oriented summer camps in the United States that sought to take youth away from their normal setting and train them in a Christian-centered, natural environment.

Organizational camps sprout up a little later than their private counterparts and they sought to serve the children of middle to lower-class families that lived in urban environments. Early organizational camps like Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft Indians and Daniel Beard's Sons of Daniel Boone were created with distinct ideas of "American boyhood adventure," but they both believed in the value of the natural world. In a similar vein, YMCA camps emerged during the 1880s with a focus on trips into the more natural world of the outdoors. However, these YMCA camps ultimately strove to create a "religious awakening" in boys and convert them to Christ.<sup>9</sup> These three early organizational camps had different philosophies, such as the antimodern, Native American sentiments of the Woodcraft Indians, the modernistic, pioneer ideals of the Sons of Daniel Boone, and the muscular Christian attitudes of the YMCA, yet they all attempted in some way to create an environment in which young boys could engage in an idealistic, natural world.

By the turn of the century, when these organizational camps began to grow in number, most summer camps only served young, American boys.<sup>10</sup> There were a few summer camps that

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<sup>8</sup> Eleanor P. Eells, "Ernest Balch and Camp Chocuroa," *The Camping Magazine*, (March 1979): 9.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie Paris, *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 42-43.

<sup>10</sup> The difference between organizational camps and private camps lay in who started them. Organizational camps were started by some bigger organization, like the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, while private camps were usually started by an individual or a small group of individuals not directly tied to any organization.

served young girls, like Laura Mattoon's Camp Kehonka and Elizabeth Hord Folt's Camp Redcroft, but not until the 1910s did women have any organizational camps to match the likes of the YMCA, the Woodcraft Indians, the Sons of Daniel Boone camps, and the newly founded Boy Scouts of America. That changed with the emergence of Camp Fire Girls and the Girls Scouts, which were founded in 1911 and 1912 respectively. These organizations served many of the same purposes as their male counterparts, as girls engaged in outdoor adventures, but they also reinforced the traditional gendered expectations of womanhood.<sup>11</sup> Although boys and girls were separated at these early camps, the introduction of organizational girl's camps at least allowed girls to participate in greater quantity within the summer camp movement.

Up until 1904, the value of these summer camps was largely based on the attitudes of those who participated in and created them. This all changed when the summer camp movement gained an important endorsement from G. Stanley Hall, whose work titled *Adolescence* gave summer camps "scientific credibility." Summer camps were now seen as nurturing environments that could enhance both the physical and mental health of children, especially in those who "risked being permanently stunted by their urban habitat."<sup>12</sup>

With Hall's endorsement, the summer camp movement took on a professional and progressive air during a time that has been commonly labeled the Progressive Era. Camp directors met for their first large-scale meeting in 1903 and again in 1905, with Hall in attendance for the latter. The first national organization for camp directors was formed in 1910 with the founding of the Camp Directors Association of America (CDAA), which was followed in 1916 with the formation of the National Association of Directors of Girls' Camps (NADGC). Eight years later, these two organizations merged to form the Camp Directors Association

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<sup>11</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 46-51.

<sup>12</sup> Michael B. Smith, "'The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper,'" 76.



(CDA) and they would later rename themselves the American Camping Association (ACA) in 1935.<sup>13</sup> With Hall's backing and the formation of these professional organizations, summer camps became a scientifically-backed, national movement that aimed to create a more beneficial, progressive childhood for the youth of America.

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) did not embrace this “modern innovation of camping” until the 1920s, following the movement's professionalization. Many of the early Lutheran camps founded during this decade were sponsored by the LCMS's Walther League, which was the denomination's youth organization. This national league for Lutheran youth was founded in 1893, but it was slow to assimilate itself into America's cultural mainstream, as the LCMS held on tight to their traditional German roots until the end of World War I.<sup>14</sup> When it did embrace modernity, the Walther League was fast to act, as Walther League camps were started in at least ten states between 1924 and 1926.<sup>15</sup> These first summer camps for Walther League youth marked the start of Lutherans venture into outdoor ministry.

When the Walther League was founded, one of the main focuses of the League's societies was to “keep our youth in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.”<sup>16</sup> This mission was accomplished, at least in the early years, through a balance of Christian knowledge and Christian service. Lutheran youth during this time engaged in a variety of secular activities, like parlor games, baseball, and picnics, through their local Walther League society. These sort of activities not only provided the youth with recreation, but with a chance to engage in popular American

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<sup>13</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 83-84.

<sup>14</sup> Jon Pahl, *Youth Ministry in Modern America: 1930-Present*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Jon Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All: The International Walther League and Lutheran Youth in American Culture, 1893-1993*. (Chicago: Wheat Ridge Ministries, 1993), 117.

<sup>16</sup> “Arnuf und Einladung” (Call and Invitation), *Der Vereinsbote*, 1, no. 11 (April 1893). Quoted in Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 19.

culture at the time. Games were not the only things that interested these Lutheran youth, as they also participated in lectures that taught them their proper place within their congregation.<sup>17</sup> This balancing act of service and knowledge not only took place within these early youth societies, but it would play out in the League's earliest summer camps as well.

Camp Arcadia, one of the first Walther League summer camps, was founded in 1922 on the banks of Lake Michigan.<sup>18</sup> In the years that followed, Arcadia served as a "primary training ground for Walther League leaders." Children who attended this summer camp on Lake Michigan would "work and play the Christian way" by participating in a mixture of recreational and religious activities that were meant to be both fun and educational. For example, campers would engage in typical camp activities like swimming, hiking, and skit nights, while still attending lectures on the Lutheran faith throughout the week.<sup>19</sup> Early Lutheran summer camps, like Arcadia, continued the tradition of Christian camping that was started by Reverend Hinckley, but they would serve as the forerunners of a distinct Lutheran approach to outdoor ministry as well.



Figure 2: Poster advertising Camp Arcadia, 1941. Taken from <https://camp-arcadia.com/about/history/>

Following the professionalization of camping during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at around the same time as Lutherans venture into the movement, camps were no longer being designed specifically as primitive environments that got children away from the toxic influences of the city and modernity. Many summer camps during the interwar years and during

<sup>17</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> The term Arcadia, or Arcadian, is defined as "any real or imaginary place offering peace and simplicity." By associating their camp with this term, it seems that Camp Arcadia's founders believed that their camp offered this sort of experience for its campers. *Dictionary.com*, s.v. "Arcadia," <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/arcadia>.

<sup>19</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 117, 149-151.

World War II, for instance, transitioned from these antimodern havens to experientially-based laboratories that aimed at producing model citizens. They still might have served as secluded retreats from modernity, but they wanted to prepare children to go back into the real world with the tools necessary to shape society as well. For example, summer camps during World War II often sought to simultaneously indoctrinate campers with democratic ideals while still providing them with a safe haven from the anxieties of war time in the city.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, camp directors during these decades were forced to grapple with the past, antimodern ideals of camping, as they tried to create an ideal environment in which to socialize children for positive engagement with the world following their time at camp.

While camp directors wrestled with how to appropriately design childhood, the camp world remained fairly small. However, its “well-established and highly regarded” foundation eventually underwent some rapid growth in the immediate aftermath of World War II. This fast-paced growth preluded many structural and cultural changes within the camping world. For example, camps increasingly became co-ed during the 1950s, which would have shocked many of the early pioneers of camping. Camps during this period began the slow process of desegregation as well. This transition took longer than the integration of boys and girls, but by the 1960s and 1970s most organizational summer camps were integrated.<sup>21</sup> Much of this growth and change within the camp world during the 1950s can be attributed to the evolving social norms of the time and the booming post-war economy.

Lutheran families during the 1950s benefitted from the era’s thriving economy, which in turn led to more money for the Lutheran church and its ministries, like the Walther League. The rising affluence of Lutherans following World War II would lead to the creation of more summer

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, “The Ego Ideal of the Happy Camper,” 80, 82-83.

<sup>21</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 267-271.

camps and financially stable parents, who could afford to send their children to camp in greater quantities. The increase of Lutheran summer camps during this decade served as a prelude to the “boom years of Christian camping from the 1960s to the early 2000s.”<sup>22</sup> These Walther League camps were founded with the League’s traditional focus on Christian knowledge and Christian service; but by the 1960s, this focus shifted a little to the service side. The organization now wanted to prepare Lutheran youth to engage more with the chaotic world around them, not just stay within safe, Lutheran circles.<sup>23</sup> This shift ultimately led to the destruction of the Walther League in the 1970s, yet its focus on service shaped the mission of Lutheran summer camps founded during the 1960s, including Camp Lakeview.

The historical trends that were previously mentioned are vital in understanding the creation of Lakeview, as the summer camp and outdoor ministry movements impacted the way in which Lakeview structured and defined itself. This was evident in how the founders of Lakeview modeled the camp on the professional and cultural standards of previous generations of camp developers. Lakeview’s overall mission was influenced by all of the outdoor ministries that came before them as well, especially in regards to the Walther Leagues’ philosophy of Christian service. In creating Lakeview, the founders of this Lutheran summer camp participated in these broader historical narratives of summer camping and outdoor ministry, but they also set out to create their own ideal version of a Lutheran summer camp that produced future, Christian leaders.

### **Historiography**

No one has ever attempted to write an analytical history of Camp Lakeview, nor of Lutheran summer camping. There have been histories of summer camps and of Lutheran youth

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<sup>22</sup> Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry,” 146.

<sup>23</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 261.

ministry, but none have given much extensive thought to the diversity of purposes within Christian summer camps. This omission is understandable, as historians only began to analyze the broader impacts of summer camping within the last two decades. Similarly, the study of youth ministry has only received limited focus within the world of academia. Yet, these histories and their conversations within the larger realms of childhood and theological studies provide a scholarly baseline upon which this study elaborates and builds.

Although it is a fairly new area of study, huge strides have been made within the field of summer camp history in recent years, as historians have finally begun to examine over a hundred years of summer camps in the United States and Canada. Leslie Paris, Sharon Wall, Abigail Van Slyck, and Michael B. Smith are a few of the pioneers in this area of historical study and within the past two decades, they have published a variety of articles and books that deal with the creation of summer camps. These camp historians approach the topic with many similar ideas about the nature of summer camp and since the field is relatively small, they often cite each other in their works. Overall, their histories of summer camp all in some way deal with the evolution of summer camps overtime, the construction of childhood, and the purposes of these summer camps from their origin to around the 1960s.

The narratives that these historians focused on provided much of the historical background on summer camps that was needed in order to properly assess the creation of Lakeview and its place within summer camp history. For example, Van Slyck's history of the camp landscape related well to the social constructs that were included at Lakeview, such as its inclusion of modern features and its physical design. Smith's research, on the other hand, proved to be important in understanding the shifting purposes of summer camps over time and it was used to put Lakeview in its proper historical context. Likewise, Paris's case study on Jewish

summer camps provided an excellent example of historical analysis, as she analyzed the purposes of strictly Jewish summer camps; an example that was modeled within this paper, but with a focus on Lutherans.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Wall's analysis of the impact of the "real world" and other outside influences on summer camps informed this paper's focus on Lutheran ideals at Lakeview. All of the narratives that these historians shared and touched on will be evident in this paper.

However, their histories were not free from differences, as each historian approached their topic with their own unique take on the nature of summer camping. As an architectural historian, Van Slyck looked at summer camping through a cultural landscape lens. She focused much of her attention on the camp landscape, different "activity arenas" within this landscape, and the institutional priorities that shaped the architecture of summer camps.<sup>25</sup> Paris drew on much of Van Slyck's work, but focused more of her history on the social construction of childhood through camp and its impacts on the children that experienced it.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Paris and more like Van Slyck, Smith centered his work on the changing ideals that informed the creation of summer camps throughout history.<sup>27</sup> Wall, the last of these four to publish their work, took all these approaches and tailored them to her examination of the meaning of modernity at summer camps and its role within the broader context of Canadian society.<sup>28</sup> All of these studies focused on unique aspects of the camp environment and they drew their conclusions on the importance of summer camps from their preferred area of focus.

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<sup>24</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, xxxi.

<sup>26</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, "The Ego Ideal," 72.

<sup>28</sup> Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 4.

One of the critical issues at stake for this group of historians was the purpose of summer camps and their relationship with the real world. Their debate revolved around the terms antimodern and countermodern. Van Slyck and Paris put summer camps within the realm of antimodern, while Smith and Wall believed that camps were countermodern or “alternate spaces.” Antimodernist proponents of summer camp history believed that summer camps were meant to serve as temporary respites from the perils of the modern world.<sup>29</sup> On the flipside, countermodernists viewed camps as an extension of this modern world and as an attempt to create something more “natural” within this world.<sup>30</sup> These definitions have opposing views of the relationship between camp builders and modernity, as camps were either apart from the world or an extension of it. In the end, both of these terms fit into the shifting narrative of summer camps, but by the 1960s, the “alternate space” or countermodernist method proved to be more instrumental in the camp world and Lakeview was one example of this sort of camp.

These works on summer camp history were useful interpretations of the history of camping broadly, but the historiography remains underdeveloped. For instance, these works neglected summer camps within the Midwest region of the United States. Paris centered her study on early summer camps in the Northeast section of the United States and Wall primarily examined camps in Ontario, Canada.<sup>31</sup> Van Slyck provided the most comprehensive study of camps, as she included a lengthy glossary of ACA accredited camps that were included in her research. Yet, the scope of her project lead to many generalities of summer camps and her study examined camps only up to the 1960s, which was five years before Lakeview was created.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 26.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, “The Ego Ideal,” 72.

<sup>31</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 11 and Wall, *The Nature of Children*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, xxxv.



This lack of research on Midwest summer camps was not due to any particular bias on the part of the authors, but on their preferred locale and the time frame of their studies. Paris, Wall, and Smith seemed to follow the lead of Van Slyck by cutting off their studies at the start of the 1960s. Paris and Smith at least made attempts to acknowledge the continued history of camps after 1960, but their arguments for this latter era remained inconclusive and relatively short. Along with this incomplete timeframe, these historians neglected the overall differences in Christian camping as well. They all mentioned the influence of Christians within the movement, but they failed to examine the greater distinctions within Christian camping, especially in regards to Lutheran summer camping history.

In order to get a more complete picture of this history, there was a need to use sources that dove into Christian youth ministry. There was a relative lack of historical research on this topic, but the few that were available added some much needed background on the development of Christian youth ministry over time. John Pahl and Rob Ribbe were the primary sources used for the purposes of this paper and they each touched on the history of outdoor ministries within their broader works. These researchers approach their topics from different fields of study, as Pahl is a historian and Ribbe is an educational theorist. However, these different approaches were beneficial in painting a more complete picture of the history and purposes of Lakeview.

Pahl, the earliest of these researchers, published two seminal books between 1993 and 2000 on the history of youth ministry in America.<sup>33</sup> Much like the camp historians that followed him, his works placed him within the broader historical field of youth studies; a field that only rose to prominence in the last couple decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pahl, however, was unique,

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<sup>33</sup> Jon Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All: The International Walther League and Lutheran Youth in American Culture, 1893-1993*, (Chicago: Wheat Ridge Ministries, 1993); *Youth Ministry in Modern America: 1930 to the Present*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000).

because he was one of the first historians to ever deal directly with the history of Christian youth. There had been histories of theology and religion in America, but none focused much attention on youth within the realm of the church. In telling this unique history, he sought to examine the evolution of youth ministry over time and to investigate its overall impact on Christian youth.<sup>34</sup>

Pahl's first book focused specifically on youth ministry within the Lutheran church, while his second book encompassed a broad view of youth ministry in America. His first book, titled *Hopes and Dreams of All*, included brief sections that dove into the history of Lutheran summer camps and their role within the broader realm of the Walther League. This Lutheran youth organization was vital in the foundation of Lutheran summer camps, so his history of it was important in understanding the creation of Lakeview. Pahl's overarching focus within this history was on the balance of "Christian knowledge and Christian service" in the Walther League, especially on its shift to service toward the end of its existence.<sup>35</sup> Camp Lakeview was a product of this same period in the history of the Lutheran Church and the debates at the time informed its overall mission.

If Pahl's research provided the historical Christian context of summer camps, then Ribbe's work provided the theoretical concepts that shaped these camps. Ribbe's article was published in the *Christian Education Journal* in 2010 and it offered an analysis of camping ministries. This proved useful in understanding the theoretical concepts that informed the creation of outdoor ministries. For example, he addressed the roles of an outdoor environment and a temporary community within an outdoor ministries' mission of creating "the next

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<sup>34</sup> Pahl, *Youth Ministry in Modern America*, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 141.

generation of lay leaders and ministers.”<sup>36</sup> This theoretical background of Christian camping was important in understanding the purposes of Lutheran summer camps such as Lakeview.

The history of Camp Lakeview, as discerned from its constitution, meeting notes, and early newsletter, suggests that that camps, especially Lutheran camps, formed after 1960 cannot be so easily lumped together with previous eras of camping history in America. Lakeview certainly drew on many of the traditions and features in American camping culture up to that point, but the camp’s founders also sought to engage with the issues of their time and with the tumultuous world around them. The story of Lakeview’s founding then shows the purposes of Lutheran summer camping during the 1960s and it elaborates on the close connection between the “real world” and the camp world within summer camp history.

### **Main Body**

During the summer of 1965, Camp Lakeview opened for its first season of camping. This inaugural season would include six weeks of “children’s camp,” where for twenty-five dollars, boys and girls in grades 4-8 could enjoy a week of Christian fellowship.<sup>37</sup> These young campers were the first to participate in Lakeview’s unique camp bubble that was designed to mold them into future, Christian leaders through Lutheran, outdoor recreation and education. Lakeview’s founders undertook this mission with much of the same philosophies as those camp pioneers before them, but they did so within the Lutheran context of youth ministry as well. Lakeview’s overall mission was directly influenced by the Lutheran



*Figure 3: Campers outside of Chippewa cabin, 1974  
(Courtesy of Lakeview Ministries)*

<sup>36</sup> Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry,” 158.

<sup>37</sup> “Season One: Children’s Camp,” 1965, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

youth ideology of the time, yet Lutheran outdoor ministries would outlive the league that created it. In this context, Lakeview and other Lutheran summer camps are the legacy of the Walther League and a fulfilment of its mission to train Lutheran youth for service to the world.

### **Creating a Camp Bubble**

Before Lakeview's founders could execute their mission to create Christian servants, they first needed to construct a temporary, natural community away from the "real world" in which campers could engage in Lutheran growth and fun. This community building process resulted in not only the physical construction of Lakeview, but its broader social constructions as well. The process that Lakeview went through during its early years would feature some familiar themes from summer camp history, such as the creation of exclusive communities and the debate over modernity. However, the end result would be a distinctly Lutheran camp bubble, or removed experience, that was designed with a specific Lutheran mission in mind.

When talking about the creation of a camp bubble there are two important factors to pay attention to: the physical space that was created and who that space was created for. The first of these factors is vital in understanding the camp's views on modernity and the ways in which they sought to tame the world around them. At Lakeview, this manifested itself in a camp environment that was located in a fairly secluded, wooded area in South Central Indiana that featured six log cabins for campers to rough it in nature. The rustic, natural setting of this camp, however, included some more modern features, like a TV, a movie projector, and the opportunity for campers to water ski.<sup>38</sup> The seeming inconsistencies of this approach fit right into the debate of modernity within camp circles at the time. Much like their fellow camp creators, Lakeview's

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<sup>38</sup> Virgil Linkert, "Description of Camp," 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

founders were forced to wrestle with how much of the outside world to include in their camp and the decisions that they made are telling of their views of the modern world.

The topic of modernity at camp has always been a point of contention within the summer camp world, yet the debate has never been static. For example, many of the earliest summer camps, no matter the background, prided themselves on the rough, “authentic,” natural environment they created, and even saw cabins as an unnecessary luxury compared to the more desirable tent-style approach. These “pioneer ideals,” however, changed over time and by the time Lakeview was founded, cabins had become the preferred norm. Another example of these shifting ideals was the role of motion pictures at camp. The showing of motion pictures at camps or trips to theaters would have been seen as a cardinal sin to traditional camp directors during the 1920s, but by the 1940s more and more campers were venturing to the theaters while they were at camp.<sup>39</sup> The place of modern features in camp life happened on a spectrum and are evidence of the intertwined nature of the modern and antimodern worldviews at summer camps.

In describing this dichotomous nature within summer camps, Sharon Wall defined camps as an “alternate space,” which means camps were subject to both the modern and antimodern worldviews.<sup>40</sup> Camp directors throughout camp history have never been able to completely escape the modern world, but they have had some say in what to include in their camp bubble. Camp Lakeview would fit into this “alternate space” mold, as the founders chose to create their camp away from modern world, yet they still decided to include modern innovations in their camp environment. By creating Lakeview in this way, its creators partook in a careful balancing act that has happened since the founding of the first summer camps.

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<sup>39</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 167-68, 176-77.

<sup>40</sup> Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 28-29.

Nature was an integral part of this balancing act and it was included in camp designs for the “natural” benefits it supposedly offered campers. As many camp historians have pointed out before, the “natural” setting of camps was in itself a preplanned construction made by camp designers and it was molded in order to create a safe,



Figure 4: Campers sitting around a campfire, 1963 (Courtesy of Lakeview Ministries)

controlled environment for children.<sup>41</sup> At religiously oriented camps, nature took on another specific purpose, as the natural environment was perceived to have a powerful influence on children. In the Christian camp setting, both religion and nature were combined in order to bring campers closer to God.<sup>42</sup> Special devotions in nature, often around campfires or by a lake, were often the primary method in which camp directors combined religious messages with the beauty of nature. Lakeview followed this ideology and concluded each day’s program with a nightly campfire devotional on the beach of Lutheran Lake.<sup>43</sup>

The camp bubble that Lakeview’s founders designed was a planned combination of all of these sentiments and ideologies. By creating an “alternate space,” they were able to include both the antimodern aspects of camping and some modern features that connected them to the “real world.” This allowed them to be away from the world, but still a part of it. The natural setting of camp also provided them with an ideal venue for ministry, as the beauty of nature and the power of God came together to form one spiritually moving message. In this natural camp environment,

<sup>41</sup> For more information on the construction of summer camps, I would refer you to Abigail Van Slyck’s work, *A Manufactured Wilderness*.

<sup>42</sup> Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> “Plenty of Exercise: Camp Lakeview Busy Place,” 1965, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

Lakeview's founders purposefully designed a physical space that could be used for Christian fellowship and to serve its campers recreational needs.

Along with the creation of the physical space, Lakeview was also designed in order to serve a specific clientele, which was Lutherans within Southern Indiana. This sort of practice was common throughout summer camp history, as different religious organizations sponsored camps to promote their own beliefs. Leslie Paris noted in her work on Jewish summer camps that these sort of denominational camps sought to combine common summer camp activities with religious themes in order to “advance community fraternalism.”<sup>44</sup> There were many similarities between the camps Paris described and Lakeview. For example, Lakeview attempted to reach a predominately Lutheran audience, as they advertised their first season of camping by calling for “boys and girls... of Missouri Synod Lutheran schools and Sunday schools.”<sup>45</sup> In 1968, they also claimed that over half of the eighty Missouri-Synod Lutheran congregations in Southern Indiana participated in “some phase of camping” at Lakeview.<sup>46</sup> It was fairly evident that the founders of Lakeview attempted to bring a certain group of children to their camp.

Many of the children that came to Lakeview during the early years were from private schools in the area, with a majority coming from Lutheran schools. This connection between private schools and private camps was a theme in Sharon Wall's work on Canadian summer camps. She observed that private schools often served as “feeders” for camps, as word of the camp was spread by the mouths of both parents and children.<sup>47</sup> At Lakeview, the most glaring example of this trend was the camp manager's close relationship with the Lutheran schools in the area. Before becoming the first camp manager of Lakeview, Virgil Linkert had been a teacher at

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<sup>44</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 93.

<sup>45</sup> “Season One: Children's Camp,” 1965, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

<sup>46</sup> Virgil Linkert, “Opportunity”, 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 67.



St. Peter's Lutheran School, a private school in Columbus, Indiana.<sup>48</sup> His connections at this school were instrumental in bringing in some of the camp's first clients. By creating this predominantly Lutheran community, Lakeview sought to serve many of the local private schools and in turn reach a greater number of children.

However, Lakeview did not make itself available to only Lutheran clients, because in the end, they wanted to serve "all children of Southern Indiana regardless of race, creed, or color."<sup>49</sup> Many private camps had made similar claims throughout history in the name of promoting democratic values, but the high prices of these camps greatly narrowed down the sort of campers who could attend them.<sup>50</sup> This did not seem to be the case at Lakeview. The vast majority of its campers came from a Lutheran background, yet there were weeks set aside to serve those of different backgrounds. For example, there were at least two weeks of camping between 1965 and 1966, where sixty-three deaf children experienced some time at camp. Lakeview also brought in over five hundred Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts during its first five seasons of camping, many of whom came "from other religious denominations."<sup>51</sup> These examples do not necessarily show that Lakeview accomplished its mission to reach campers of all backgrounds, but they do demonstrate Lakeview's, and to a certain extent Lutheran's, overall focus on service to the world at the time.

The construction of Lakeview's camp bubble was in many ways similar to previous attempts to create a community in the woods. Lakeview's creators were forced to grapple with modernity, with designing nature, and with reaching certain clients. These factors demonstrate Lakeview's place within the broader histories of summer camp history, but they show the

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<sup>48</sup> "Lutherans to Dedicate New Camp Site Sunday," 1964, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

<sup>49</sup> Virgil Linkert, "Registration", 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Virgil Linkert, "Registration Progress," 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

influence of other outside factors as well. The biggest of these factors was its Lutheran background, which played an important role in the construction of the Lakeview camping community. Once this initial camping space was completed, Lakeview was free to focus on the actual business of camping and on producing Christian leaders.

### **“Work and Play the Christian Way”**

The motto at Camp Cleghorn, a Walter League camp in Wisconsin, during the 1930s was “Work and Play the Christian Way.”<sup>52</sup> Not only did this short, simple motto sum up the experience of campers at Cleghorn, it offered insight in to the way Lutherans viewed the camp environment. With this motto in mind, the Lutheran camp experience was not seen as just a recreational arena for children to have fun, but also an opportunity for educational and spiritual development. Lakeview followed pretty closely to Camp Cleghorn’s work and play philosophy, as they promoted “Christian fellowship in all activities, devotions, and God’s Word.”<sup>53</sup> This philosophy on the camp experience was vital in Lakeview’s pursuit of creating Christian servants to the world.

In understanding the purposes of a Lutheran summer camp, or any summer camp in fact, it would be mistake to overlook the importance of play. Parents may have sent their children to camp for a variety of other reasons, but the children would not want to go back unless it was actually a fun experience. It was then the job of camp directors to create a structured environment that promoted fellowship, developed character, and was still enjoyable for the

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<sup>52</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 149.

<sup>53</sup> “Season One: Children’s Camp,” 1965, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

campers. Leslie Paris referred to this process as “rituals of the season” and these rituals were important in the construction of childhood at camp.<sup>54</sup>

Play did not necessarily equate to freedom of choice for campers at camp, because the whole process was carefully structured in order to promote clean, safe fun. For example, Lakeview ran a pretty rigid program schedule and campers could expect “something doing every minute.” These young campers were up by 7:30 in the morning and experienced a full day of activities before heading to bed by 10 p.m., which must have been a pretty long day for most ten year olds.<sup>55</sup> This regimentation of leisure time at Lakeview was a common practice at many other summer camps throughout history as well, as camp developers wanted their camper’s play to be “productive and well-managed.”<sup>56</sup> Much like the creation of the camp bubble, the construction of play was a very serious task that was undertaken by adults with specific end goals in mind.

One of these goals at Camp Lakeview was “Christian Fellowship through recreation.”<sup>57</sup> Campers that ventured to Lakeview in the early years participated in many games and activities that promoted this mission. Some of the activities that Lakeview campers participated in had been around since the inception of camps, such as swimming, archery, and baseball.<sup>58</sup> These were primarily leisure games for the campers, but were seen as character building activities by those who designed the camp programs as well. By having children participate in controlled, safe “recreation programs,” directors could ensure that their campers could have fun and develop important skills, like teamwork, fitness, and independence. At Lakeview, these activities also had

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<sup>54</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 96.

<sup>55</sup> “Plenty of Exercise: Camp Lakeview Busy Place,” 1965, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

<sup>56</sup> By the 1960s, many summer camps were influenced by progressive theory and sought to make their schedules less-structured, but many camps, especially private camps, retained at least some form of regimented camp program. Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 114

<sup>57</sup> “Oct. 30, 1962 Meeting,” Minutes, Lutheran Camp Association.

<sup>58</sup> Leslie Paris included a very descriptive section of these activities at early American summer camps in *Children’s Nature* and her research can be found between pages 113 through 118.

the added benefit of promoting Christian values, as “children learned to play and have fun together while pleasing their Savior, Jesus Christ.” Through these leisure activities, Lakeview’s directors hoped that recreation would enhance their camper’s abilities to work together in a Christ-like way.

The recreation program at Lakeview was not limited to athletic events either, as the arts and theater programs were a central part of the camp week. The focus of these programs was very similar to that of the other recreation



*Figure 5: Campers perform a skit, 1974 (Courtesy Lakeview Ministries)*

activities, especially in regards to character building, but there was an added self-realization aspect as well. One former staff member recounted her experiences with the theater program in a 1971 newsletter and said that “campers have to use their imagination and their creativity... and by the end of the week some of the campers may even have found a new side of their personality through this dramatic experience.”<sup>59</sup> This experience then served as a way for campers to express themselves and to develop their own self-identity. No one ever asked the children what they thought of these creative exercises, but the Lakeview staff at least viewed the theater program as an essential part of the character building process and of their overall recreation program.

Camp Lakeview’s take on play was evidence of recreations importance within the broader aims of its summer camp program. The directors of Lakeview, like many camp directors

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<sup>59</sup> Camp Lakeview, “Newsletter: Camp Lakeview,” IV, no. 1 (April 1971).

before, sought to structure their recreation program in a way that would be beneficial for camper development. The campers had very little say in what the play would look like, but based on the activities and the increasing numbers of campers over the years it had to be a little enjoyable. This construction of the camper's play was also evidence of Lakeview overarching purpose, which was the development of Christian leaders. By combining the spiritual and the recreational, Lakeview's planners built off of the ideas of past camp leaders and added in their own Lutheran views on spiritual development.

Another way that Lakeview attempted to shape their campers was through education. Campers could expect to learn about the world around them through nature hikes or outdoor education programs. They could also expect to learn about Lutheran beliefs through morning devotions and nightly campfires. Whether it be nature-based or religious-based, learning played a huge role in Lakeview's mission. In incorporating education into their camp program, Lakeview's developers were part of a larger historical trend at camps, but they still approached education from a distinctly Lutheran perspective.

Education had been a key component of summer camp philosophy since the 1920s and some even claimed that "the best summer camps are like progressive schools in the outdoors."<sup>60</sup> This view on the educational value of summer camps showed that by the 1960s, camps had become another extension of the classroom. In relationship to educational theory at the time, camps were also seen as experiential laboratories, where campers could learn through experience. For example, they would learn about nature by going on hikes and actually observing the world in action. The impact of such educational experiments at camps was a mixed bag of

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<sup>60</sup> Archives of Ontario, Legislative Press Clippings, MS-755, reel 86, "For Children's Welfare," *Globe and Mail*, (14 July, 1944). Quoted in Wall, *The Nurture of Nature*, 162.

successes and failures, but the effort on the part of camp directors to incorporate progressive educational theory showed that education was valued very highly in the camp setting.

Lakeview's founders bought into the value of learning at camp and they incorporated a variety of strategies in order to foster educational growth at camp. One way they sought to educate their campers was through nature, as they had an abundance of opportunities to study it. The camps leaders could take the campers on hikes through the woods, where they could identify trees and plants, or the campers could venture to the barn, where they could "observe the pheasants, chickens, horses, and ducks."<sup>61</sup> The educational opportunities did not stop at the end of the summer either, as Lakeview offered a "School-at-Camp" program. This educational activity allowed students from local Lutheran schools to learn about biology and forestry, while also teaching them how to become "God's stewards and caretakers of His property."<sup>62</sup>

These "School-at-Camp" programs, along with showing a focus on nature-based education, demonstrated Lakeview's ability to weave spiritual exercises into seemingly secular activities. Lutheran summer camps have always stressed this connection and they have tried to combine the heavenly and the earthly in all their daily routines. However, the main avenue for religious education at these camps was through traditional methods of theological teaching. Through lectures, chapels, or devotions, "Christian knowledge" was taught to the campers by either a local Lutheran leader or a camp staff member.<sup>63</sup> These Christ-centered lessons were an important part of the spiritual and educational development of campers at Lutheran summer camps throughout the country.

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<sup>61</sup> Camp Lakeview, "Newsletter: Camp Lakeview," IV, no. 1 (April 1971).

<sup>62</sup> Camp Lakeview, "Newsletter: Camp Lakeview, III, no. 2 (June 1970).

<sup>63</sup> Pahl, *Youth Ministry in Modern America*, 25.

Lakeview used a combination of both recreation and education within their camp environment in order to promote Christian fellowship. This fellowship was vital in fulfilling their mission to create Christian leaders. The recreation program that Lakeview designed was fairly structured, but it allowed campers to enjoy their experience and learn some valuable skills in the process as well. Through progressive educational strategies, campers learned about both God and nature. These methods were used with the hopes that those who came to Lakeview would leave with the skills and knowledge necessary in order to actively engage the modern world around them as Christian servants.

### **A Legacy of Christian Service**

The 1960s in America were a turbulent decade characterized by social upheaval and cultural change. In the camping world at the time, many camp directors were worried about the impacts that this chaotic world could have on their campers, but in the end, they still believed that camp world could serve as “a haven where the damage done by [modern] tensions can be repaired.”<sup>64</sup> If camp advocates sought to retreat from the modern world, then the Walther League and Lutheran outdoor ministries tried to engage this chaotic world around them through the idea of Christian service. However, the Walther League’s efforts to serve the world during the decade presaged their ultimate collapse during the 1970s. Lutheran summer camps on the other hand would live on. It was into this divided, complicated world that Lakeview was created and it was for this same world that it drew its purpose.

Lakeview’s mission began in 1965 with the creation of a camp community that was designed for Lutheran “growth and experience.” Through the space they created, they used

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<sup>64</sup> Smith, “The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper,” 90.



recreation and education to promote “Christian fellowship,” which equipped campers with valuable knowledge and life skills for their ultimate return to the “real world”. These two factors played an integral role in Lakeview’s overall goal of molding its campers into future, Christian leaders that could serve the outside world.<sup>65</sup> This blossoming of youth into Christian leaders was seen as the “truly transformational” aspect of the camp experience.<sup>66</sup> Through leadership training and high school service programs, Lakeview attempted to use their unique camp experience to shape the next generation of Christian servants.

The main target of Lakeview’s efforts were youth between the ages of about nine and thirteen. As already noted, the camp environment at Lakeview was designed for them and through the camp experience, they were given the “opportunity to grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically.” However, since they



*Figure 6: Unknown staff member with camper, unknown year (Courtesy of Lakeview Ministries)*

were so young, their experiences were more of a stepping stone to their next step in spiritual transformation. This next step on their transformative journey was high school and this was a time when proper leadership training was vital. Through trained adult leaders, these youth learned about Christian leadership by participating in “study, recreation, and work projects.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> “Oct. 30, 1962 Meeting,” Minutes, Lutheran Camp Association.

<sup>66</sup> Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry,” 159.

<sup>67</sup> Virgil Linkert, “Registration,” 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

They were in need of this extra attention and training, as they were closer to more profound participation in the chaotic world around them.

Two ways in which Lakeview attempted to engage these Lutheran high school youth were through Lutheran Service Volunteer schools (L.S.V.) and Walther League camp sessions. The L.S.V. schools had been created by the Walther League in 1944 and these schools put on “weeklong leadership training institutes around the country.” This training often stressed “learning by doing” and summer camps were a prime environment for this sort of experience.<sup>68</sup> The Walther League used Lakeview as a venue for their traditional camp programs as well, in which high schoolers participated in a normal week of summer camping as opposed to just leadership training. These were fairly well attended too, as one hundred twenty-three high school aged Walther Leaguers ventured to Lakeview between 1965 and 1968.<sup>69</sup> These Lutheran youth organizations played an important role at Lakeview during the camp’s early years, but the lasting effect they had on Lakeview and other outdoor ministries was their focus on producing Christian servants.

Service had always been a key pillar within Lutheran youth organizations, especially within the Walther League. Over the course of the League’s existence, its leaders often tried to balance their ideas of service with their focus on Christian knowledge, which primarily revolved around theological purity. Summer camps were one environment in which this balance took place, as many early summer camps placed just as much emphasis on “traditional Lutheran dogma and piety” as they did on leadership development. However, this balance shifted, at camp

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<sup>68</sup> Pahl, *Youth Ministry in Modern America*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> Virgil Linkert, “Registration Progress,” 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

and within the league as a whole, to the service side over time and by the 1960s, the League's primary objective was to move "youth from passively sitting to compassionately standing."<sup>70</sup>

The ways that the League sought to move its young audience to action during the decade varied, but they all in some way aimed to engage Lutheran youth in the broader world. The League's "Inasmuch" program, for example, sponsored youth work camps around the country and in global places like Nigeria and Mexico City. At these work camps, Lutheran youth served the community around them through various service activities and ultimately, "they left for home with new insights into human suffering, into vocations of mercy, and into Christian community living."<sup>71</sup> Another similar program that the League sponsored was the Prince of Peace Volunteer Corps (POPV), in which young volunteers were sent around the world to live in and aid suffering communities.<sup>72</sup> These profoundly influential programs allowed Lutheran youth to be 'in' the world and provided them with opportunities to serve the people of it. In the end, however, this emphasis on the secular world eventually led to some significant strain within the League and the greater LCMS body as well.

The Walther League had always been influenced by the world around them, as the youth organization was one way that Lutherans assimilated themselves into American culture during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the century progressed, many Missouri-Synod Lutherans embraced the modern world in which they lived and by the end of World War II, the Synod itself reflected the more liberal society around them.<sup>73</sup> This shift, at least for a couple decades, did not lead to any major breaks within the LCMS church. The pushback finally came during the turbulent times of

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<sup>70</sup> Pahl, *Youth Ministry in Modern America*, 25, 32.

<sup>71</sup> Karl Lutze, "Youth Work Camp," *Workers Quarterly* 33 (January 1962): 51. Quoted from Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 254.

<sup>72</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 256.

<sup>73</sup> James C. Burkee, *Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod: A Conflict That Changed American Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 19-20.

the 1960s. This era in the churches history was defined by a battle between “moderates” and “conservatives,” and this conflict mirrored the greater cultural and political battles that took place within America at the time.<sup>74</sup>

The youth were right in the thick of these battles, both in America and within the Walther League. As young people around the country took to the streets to protest the injustices they saw within America, Lutheran youth joined in and continued to serve the world around them through their Walther League sponsored service programs. For all their efforts to promote Christian service, the League dealt with some heated pushback from many of the adult leaders within the LCMS, as some believed that the organization had “all but abandoned the Christian faith,” by venturing into the secular world. The balance within the church body had shifted again toward theological traditionalism and the League struggled to find a balance within the chaotic, changing world around them. These conflicts during the 1960s and 1970s, within the LCMS and the world, eventually destroyed the League from the outside. The constant flack the League received during the course of the decade led to less donations and empty coffers, and in 1977, Lutheran youth officially lost their youth League.<sup>75</sup>

Outdoor ministries promoted Christian service, like the Walther League had attempted in years past, yet these camps continued to serve Lutheran youth long after the League’s collapse. How then did Lutheran summer camps avoid the same fate as the Walther League? The answer to this question lies in the nature of the camp experience, as they were “alternate spaces” that lent themselves to “theological and practical experimentation.”<sup>76</sup> Basically, camps, unlike the Walther League, had the freedom to try new things without outside pressure from a greater

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<sup>74</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 261.

<sup>75</sup> Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 261, 290.

<sup>76</sup> Pahl, *Youth Ministry in Modern America*, 25.

church body. Yes, Lakeview and other Lutheran camps were in some way tied to the church, usually through donations and pastoral advisors, but they were not directly funded or controlled by the LCMS.<sup>77</sup> This means they were able to escape much of the internal bickering that happened within that church body during the 1960s.

The secluded nature of Lutheran camps allowed camp directors to continue their mission to train Christian servants to the world as well. Since camps were seen as safe, antimodern environments, parents and Lutheran leaders did not have to worry about too much negative, outside influence on their children. This belief was partially true as camp was only a temporary community, but the outside world was always a reality at these camps. Within these Lutheran communities, these youth were trained, through Christian recreation and education, to go back into the “real world” and live “a life of service and ministry to God’s kingdom.”<sup>78</sup> Camps, like Lakeview, are then important within the history of Lutheran youth ministry, because they carried on the Walther League’s mission to create Christian servants to the world, even after the League itself faded into just a distant memory.

### **Moving Forward**

On the first day of February in 2011, over 1,600 campers registered for a week of camping at Lakeview Ministries and by the end of the month, that total had risen to 1,900. These campers had signed up not only for traditional Camp Lakeview sessions, they had registered for the newer Lakeview Villages option as well. This newer addition had been designed specifically for middle-school and high-school youth, a development reminiscent of the Walther League’s youth camps. Through this new development, Lakeview was better prepared to “provide a

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<sup>77</sup> Lutheran camps like Lakeview often put local pastors on their Board of Directors, in order to guide the theological aspects of the outdoor ministry.

<sup>78</sup> Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry,” 158

Christian camp experience to every child who wants to come to Lakeview.” The fundraising efforts that had funded this endeavor were rightfully called the “Let the Children Come” campaign.<sup>79</sup> With these new additions, Lakeview continued to serve its campers and continued to provide them with opportunities to “grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically.”<sup>80</sup>

If the history of summer camps has proven anything, it is that camping has never been a straightforward, linear endeavor, as camps are both apart from and within the world. The history of Camp Lakeview was just one example of the complex nature of summer camps and its story highlighted some common themes within summer camp and youth ministry circles. For example, Lakeview was created within the historical camp context, as it used many common camp constructions, such as a temporary, alternate community, a focus on progressive education, and a recreational program, in order to achieve its overall goal of training future, Christian servants. This portion of Lakeview’s story showed their relative connection to the broader aims of many of the summer camps that came before them.

The historical context of Lakeview’s founding also showed the close connection between the modern world and the camp world. The most glaring example of this relationship was the Walther League and its fall within the LCMS. This League, its history, and its purpose were instrumental in the creation of Lakeview and many other Lutheran outdoor ministries, as camps were one way in which the League sought to engage Lutheran youth. The League, however, fell victim to the chaos of the times and could not escape the destructive conflicts that erupted within the LCMS and society during the 1960s. The unique nature of camp allowed Lutheran outdoor ministries to escape a similar fate and gave them an opportunity to fulfil the League’s mission to develop Christian servants.

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<sup>79</sup> Lakeview Ministries, “Lake Views,” 15, no. 1, (March 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Virgil Linkert, “Registration”, 1968, Lakeview Ministries Archives.

This purpose was the bridge between the camp world and the “real world,” as outdoor ministries aimed to send their campers back into society with the tools necessary to serve it. If camps did not actively seek to engage the world around them, then they would merely serve as a form of temporary recreation. Outdoor ministries then cannot be overlooked within the histories of summer camps and youth ministries, as they have a broader mission that connects them to the “real world.” At Lakeview, this broader purpose was to create future, “Christian Leadership” that would ultimately return to the world and serve those around them. So even though Lakeview has grown and changed over the years, this mission remains at the heart of its ministry and it connects them to the greater world around them.



*Figure 7: Camp Lakeview's motto, 1973 (Courtesy of Lakeview Ministries)*



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