

SECTION F – REPORTS OF SYNOD RELATED EDUCATION AGENCIES

1. Bear Creek Camp
2. Muhlenberg College
3. St. Olaf College
4. United Lutheran Seminary

BEAR CREEK CAMP



Greetings from Bear Creek Camp, the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry for the Southeastern and Northeastern Pennsylvania Synods of the ELCA. Thank you Southeastern PA Synod and congregations for your ongoing support of the ministry at Bear Creek Camp. We are grateful to work in partnership with each of you and to be an extension of your ministries.



In 2025, we celebrated our 51st year of ministry at Bear Creek Camp – located on 3000 acres outside of Wilkes-Barre, PA. Across seven weeks of overnight summer camp programming, we welcomed 563 youth campers. We serve our local community through our Nature Day Camp program which had 201 participants this summer and through hosting field trips and environmental education experiences in which we welcomed over 1000 students from around the region in the Spring and Fall. Bear Creek Camp staff-led retreats in 2025 included Winter Youth Camp, Spring and Fall Family Retreat Weekends, and Spring and Fall Women’s Retreats. With the addition of our hosted guest groups, this past year over 3000 people experienced the wonder of God’s creation surrounded by positive community at BCC.



This past summer, 41 young adult leaders followed the call to serve as camp staff and experienced the formational experience of living in intentional Christian community. These staff continue to be one of the best expressions of our ministry and truly demonstrate and facilitate for

the campers they serve ‘embracing our identity as God’s beloved children.’ Each of them serve as role models to summer campers through modeling faith in action and providing caring support through a week of camp. We are equipping these emerging leaders with hard and soft skills to use in their future careers and in their lives. Through this community, we’re also empowering the next generation of the Church as it exists within and beyond the walls of our congregations.



through the “Philly Connect” program.

We deeply value our partnership with our synods and congregations. It was an honor to participate in “In God’s Image” and the “Generosity Extravaganza.” BCC staff have been invited to serve as leaders at conference and mission district training events. We value the Sunday services, youth group evenings, and fundraising events in which we have been a part at your congregations this past year. We are deeply grateful for SEPA Synod and Bishop Penman’s support of our continued outreach to youth and families of the NE/NW and Center City Mission Districts

Your financial and prayerful support of Bear Creek Camp as a synod and as individual congregations is vital to our success. Your investment is just that – an investment. Research shows that youth who attend camp experience measurable change in their commitment to personal faith, their desire to participate in faith practices in their home, and their sense that being a part of a faith community like a church is important to their life.



Our summer theme for 2026, “Go” is about our call to be disciples in God’s world – entering the world with wonder and daring, to go with one another in the spirit of community, to shine Christ’s light to the world, and to “go wild” exploring God’s creation. Please continue to pray for Bear Creek Camp as together we invite all people to explore, celebrate, and grow in relationship with God, nature, and community.

Respectfully submitted,
Collin Grooms - Executive Director
www.bearcreekcamp.org

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

See Section F, Addendum 1

ST. OLAF COLLEGE

See Section F, Addendum 2

UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you as you gather for your Synod Assembly. On behalf of United Lutheran Seminary, thank you for your faithful partnership in forming leaders for Christ's Church.

This is a remarkable year in the life of the seminary. In 2026, we mark our bicentennial, celebrating 200 years of preparing leaders to proclaim the Gospel, serve communities, and guide the Church through seasons of change. We give thanks for those who came before us, whose vision and faithfulness built the foundation we stand on today. At the same time, we look ahead with confidence, trusting that God continues to call new leaders for a new day in the life of the Church.

That sense of being grounded and moving forward at the same time is shaping everything we do. The needs of the Church are changing, and so the way we prepare leaders is changing as well. Across our campuses in Gettysburg and Philadelphia, and through our distributed learning model, students are engaging in theological education that is rigorous, flexible, and deeply connected to real ministry contexts. Many remain rooted in their home communities while they study, bringing what they learn directly into the places where they serve.

We are forming leaders not only for congregations, but also for chaplaincy, nonprofit leadership, campus ministry, and emerging forms of service that continue to take shape across the Church. The need for well-prepared pastors and deacons remains urgent, and we are responding by growing into that need with creativity and purpose.

At a time when many theological schools are facing uncertainty, United Lutheran Seminary is in a position of strength. Our recent ATS reports show an institution with significant financial

stability and long-term sustainability, including strong reserves and consistent operating performance . At the same time, we continue to see encouraging signs in enrollment and student engagement across our programs . These are not simply institutional metrics. They are signs that we are equipped to carry this mission forward and to invest in the future of the Church.

One of the clearest ways that investment is felt is in the lives of our students. Because of the generosity of congregations and individuals across this Church, we have been able to remove many of the financial barriers that once stood in the way of theological education. Today, only a small percentage of our students take on educational debt. That means our graduates are free to say yes to calls in congregations and ministries without hesitation, able to serve where they are needed most.

We see hope in these students every day. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring with them a deep commitment to the Gospel and to the communities they will serve. Some are answering a call they have carried for years. Others are stepping into ministry in places that have long been underserved. All of them are being formed in partnership with the wider Church.

That partnership matters more than ever. The seminary does not raise up leaders on its own. This is shared work. When you encourage someone to explore a call, when you support a student, when you pray for this ministry, you are part of forming the next generation of leaders for Christ's Church.

As we mark this bicentennial year, we are not simply looking back. We are making intentional investments in the future. We are strengthening our campuses to be more accessible and more welcoming. We are expanding programs that equip leaders for a rapidly changing world. We are building partnerships that extend our reach into new communities and new forms of ministry.

This is a moment of gratitude, but it is also a moment of commitment. We believe the Church will continue to need thoughtful, faithful, well-formed leaders in the years ahead, and we are committed to preparing them.

We ask for your prayers, that God would continue to call and sustain leaders for the Church. We ask for your encouragement, that you would help identify those who may be discerning a call. And we ask for your support, so that together we can ensure that financial barriers never stand in the way of formation.

Thank you for your faithfulness and for your partnership in this shared work. May God bless you, your bishop, and the congregations you represent, and strengthen you for the ministry you carry.

In Christ,

Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Ph.D.

President, United Lutheran Seminary