

SHARING: how churches promote camping & help campers with scholarships:

A question was asked of the churches in the Oregon-Idaho Conference Eastern District: how does your church promote camping and help campers with scholarships? Some of the responses follow:

Jason Lee Memorial in Blackfoot, ID has a camp Sunday in February or March. This year they had a camp theme during worship and then the usual ice cream social (homemade ice cream and toppings) with the camp kids serving and adults donating to a scholarship fund. Folks were encouraged to wear camp type clothes and this year the altar area included a red & white checked cloth, lantern, home made wooden cross, walking stick, trees, etc. Camp info is put out for campers to start signing up that Sunday.

During the summer kids planning to go to camp help their parents mow the church lawn as part of their thank you for the scholarships. Jason Lee is usually able to give at least \$100 per child. Last year they had 12 kids go! Then the pastor makes sure each child gets a postcard from her while they are at camp and the campers are included in prayers at church that week.

There is an all church potluck and talent show in May with donations going to camp scholarships. Often old camp skits show up on the program! Early in September they have another Camp Sunday when the campers help with the worship service and report their experiences at church camp.

Whitney UMC has a Camp Sunday (March 5th this year) in which the church Camping Coordinator, Ann Hawkins, set up a display in the sanctuary and made a plea for funds through two young campers. They recounted their experience of camp and its benefits for them. The church responded with between five and six hundred dollars for scholarships. Additionally, the UMW and the UMM contributed toward this as well.

St. Paul's UMC, in Idaho Falls promotes camp by advertising the camps in their newsletter, by encouraging camping through their various Sunday School classes and youth groups, and by a camping bulletin board near the front entrance. They do several yearly fund raisers (led by each of their youth groups: 5/6, Jr. High, and Sr. High) so that they can provide a \$100 scholarship for each camper and they try to arrange to group their campers of each age group together so that they can share rides to camp and so that their kids will have others there that they know.

American Falls UMC has a camp secretary (who is also a camp counselor which makes a big difference) who does a good job of promoting summer camps -- at least for the children and youth. A small amount of money is placed in the budget each year to help provide scholarship money to children/youth who attend camp, but there is always a bigger need and demand for more help with scholarships.

The Sunday School holds fund-raisers so that each student who wishes to attend camp may do so. Last year they held a "Hire A Kid" event where people hired students -- following a church potluck -- to do various jobs at their homes. The people paid for these services which went towards the scholarships. This seemed to work pretty well and it may be repeated again this year. Other typical fund raisers, like baked food sales, have also been used.

Shelley Community UMC has pastoral announcements from the pulpit and personal promotions from the 'ministers in the pews' when the materials arrive. They post the available information on our boards. Then their camp coordinator-- who also serves as a camp counselor -- personally recruits possible candidates. This approach has worked well for their small congregation, as this year they may have up to five kids going to various camps --quite remarkable considering there were none 4 years ago.

As far as scholarships go.. Their board just recently voted to co-pay \$100 per camper. Some of the monies are memorial funds, the balance will be from general funds. The folks in this congregation are pleased that this vital ministry is growing along with them!

Eagle UMC places information on camping in the newsletter (for months) and in the Sunday morning bulletin. They also have a camping bulletin. They also print information on everyone who goes to camp. Announcements are made periodically during worship and at youth group.

The church pays for one day at camp for all youth and children. They pay two days for all those who attend horse camp. They pay for needy youth and children.

They raise money for camp scholarship by

- A. Hosting an annual dinner which raises about \$150 for camp scholarships.
- B. Soliciting donations
- C. Selling stock in camp, a program where they encourage people to buy one day (1 stock certificate) at camp. The child that receives that sponsored day is given a pre-stamped and addressed post card to write their stockholder about what they did on that day.

Eagle also provides deans, counselors, nurses and C.I.T.'s (about 5-6 a year).

Meridian UMC promotes camp programs through the church bulletin and newsletter. Their UMW and UMM provide scholarship to help pay camp fees and their Good Samaritan Fund will also pick up some costs where the need is great.

Wesleyan Campus Ministry at Boise State University helps out the camping program by encouraging students to be counselors at church camps. Each summer they have between two to five students that participate as counselors.

Hillview UMC holds a camp Sunday as soon as the information from the Conference Camping Office comes out. Both services focus on camping, and they ask persons to come ready to go to camp. (In the past people have even brought their camping chairs and sleeping bags into worship.) They also take the Church School time to promote camping.

They have a scholarship fund that is supported by our men's gatherings' Easter Breakfast. They also have offering throughout the year for the fund. Their goal is to provide a 112 scholarship for all campers. All campers are required to help at the Church to receive scholarships. Campers names are placed on a board and the work that they do is recorded. (It should be mentioned that this "work" includes coming to Church, Church School, youth groups, etc. as well as assisting with the breakfast,

clean-up days, and other special activities of the Church.

All Campers and staff persons are prayed for before they go to camp, and the camps are prayed for each week as well.

Burley UMC for the most part, does not have to promote camping. Due to the proximity to Sawtooth, it is just understood that when one is old enough one goes to camp! Usually there is much word of mouth among the youth to generate interest in going to camp.

They usually have two to three fund-raisers each year for the purpose of camp scholarships. Spaghetti feeds, Taco feeds, Potato Bars etc.

Boise First UMC has a six member CRMT (Camp & Retreat Ministry Team) and each member has recently been a camp dean, counselor, nurse, CIT or other on-site volunteer. The Team also has youth reps who are experienced campers and provide good ideas and advice.

Through donations and fundraisers they have established a Campership Fund that offers financial assistance to everyone who applies. Last year they had 65 campers and 31 received some assistance. Campership recipients are asked to write the Team a letter during or right after camp, sharing the highlights of their week. These heartwarming letters are a personal way to share the camp experience with the congregation, and especially with donors who support the Fund. (Letters are only shared if the camper gives permission!) The sale of shirts with the camp and/or Church logo was a successful fundraiser in the past, and promotion lives on as church members enjoy and wear their shirts.

Along with using their newsletter, bulletin boards, announcements and bulletin inserts to promote the value of the camping experience, they use enthusiastic campers. Some of their 6th graders, assisted by a Team member, planned and presented a program to all of the third through sixth grade Sunday School classes. They shared a large mural from their camp experience last summer and then answered questions. Age appropriate camp information was sent home that day through each Sunday School teacher.

Another Team member spoke to UMW about camp and discovered several women who were former campers, which led to an interesting meeting as well as a donation to the Fund. Music directors promote the music camps through their choirs of all ages. The Youth director is also a camp counselor and drives groups to camp and Counselor-in-Training workshops.

An enthusiastic group of members of all ages participates in the Sawtooth clean-up week-end, and always returns with reports of good fellowship with the volunteers from other churches.

Rupert UMC has a cake/pie/bread auction during coffee hour one Sunday in March or early April to raise funds to assist campers who wish to attend camp. The congregation has been very supportive, both in donating food for sale and in bidding on the items for sale. It is a fun time for everyone.

'Sunflower" the cow even appeared to make her donation of a delicious, chocolate pie!

They also have a 'Camp Sunday'. Everyone is encouraged to wear their favorite camp t-shirt or sweatshirt to church that day. Following worship a light camp-style lunch is served – hotdogs & buns, chips, salads and 'smore' bar cookies. This meal is provided by the Camp Committee. The Camp Coordinators are on hand with registration forms and information for parents and youth. They encourage them to complete application forms that day and make the initial deposit. They also have an application form that the camper must complete if they wish to apply for a partial scholarship to assist with camp costs. This year one Camp Coordinator set his table up in front of a full sized tent!

Kuna UMC has the youth make and sell food at fellowship time to raise money. Also, this year, an annual fund raiser, the Birthday Dinner and auction will be designating funds to go to camp scholarship. The church totals the amount, and it is divided evenly among the kids who attend camp.