

## 2020 Annual Report

### Mar-Lu-Ridge Conference and Educational Center

Mission Statement: We welcome all people to an experience of Christian community that changes lives, makes disciples, builds friendships, and encourages care of God's creation.

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Rev. Matthew Fuhrman, President

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Mr. Jaelyn Westbrook

Ms. Sarah Lefler – Exec. Director

Ms. Amy Mambu – Assoc. Director

## Community – Service - Sanctuary



MountainService Quilts and Kits for Lutheran World Relief

**"I thank God each time I remember you." Philippians 1:3**

Your prayers and support mean a great deal to us, and we remember you daily in our own prayers. These last 11 years have been full of challenges, especially regarding facilities, but you have remained faithful and we have made great progress. No gift is more important than another, so whether you are a monthly donor, like to support one particular fundraiser, or give to each fundraiser through the year, we appreciate you! Thank you for lifting up the ministry of Mar-Lu-Ridge.

We want to include a special thank you to all those people who have directed their Thrivent Choice dollars to Mar-Lu-Ridge. In 2020, we received over \$7,340.00! This has been a tremendous blessing each month, and we deeply appreciate you choosing our ministry for these donations.

The partnership we enjoy with the DE MD Synod and the Metropolitan DC Synod of the ELCA is a continued blessing. Groups associated with both synods utilize the facility for meetings and retreats, and the synods contribute financially to help meet the needs of ever-increasing monthly expenses. We are grateful for the support of our Bishops - Bishop Leila Ortiz (Metro DC), and Bishop Bill Gohl (DE MD) for their prayers and counsel as we strive to improve and increase the ministry of Mar-Lu-Ridge.



### **The Building Block Society**

Members of the Building Block Society have pride in the rich history of Mar-Lu-Ridge and are committed to a vision of its continuation as a part of God's tomorrow. We thank and recognize the following people who have chosen to include Mar-Lu-Ridge in their planned giving strategy:

Rev. Gerry and Mrs. Elizabeth Rickel

Mrs. Joan Orso

Dr. Monica E. Yost

Rev. Darrell and Mrs. Mary Layman

Mrs. Ilona Ries\*

Mrs. Phyllis Nichols\*

Mr. Thomas Bikle

Anonymous

Rev. Chris Ramsey\*

(\*deceased)

Anonymous

Rev. Eric and Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo

Anonymous

Carol Johnson\*

Rev. Donald and Mrs. Miriam Keyser

Mr. Mark Huffman

Mr. David and Mrs. Judy Price

Mrs. Sandy Banko

## **From the President of our Board of Directors:**

There is usually a chuckle and a groan in our house whenever we hear the word “unprecedented” being used, as in “during these unprecedented times.” How often have we heard these words, or words like them used over the past year? Politicians, CEO’s, public officials, and public speakers have used (and perhaps overused) such a description as they have addressed the ongoing global pandemic. Whenever I hear it, I want to respond, “We get it. We understand. And we are living it.” Borrowing something that I’ve read posted several times on social media, we look forward to living in “precedented times.”

And yet, I find myself searching for words that otherwise would fit the situation, and so I used them here, again. The global pandemic has been an unprecedented time for the entire world, and Mar-Lu-Ridge has been no exception. It provided many challenges that affected the operation and availability of the camp this past year. But it also witnessed the wonderful leadership and community that we have at Mar-Lu-Ridge step up and adapt to such challenges with an unprecedented amount of ingenuity, courage and faithfulness.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wanted to express the admiration and thankfulness that we have for our Executive Director and Associate Director, all the year-round staff of the camp, and all the camp counselors and additional staff that join MLR for the summer. Through their careful planning and commitment, Mar-Lu-Ridge did not close its ministry, but provided online camp, grew in service opportunities for both the immediate community and world, offered expanded family camping experiences, and continued to keep the wider MLR community connected through social media and traditional mailings. Even now they are preparing a year of service and camping for 2021, incorporating all the latest precautions and advice needed to keep everyone safe and offer the fullness of outdoor ministry that is possible. Please continue to keep them and their efforts in your prayers.

I also wanted to thank you – the supporters and members of the Mar-Lu-Ridge community for your faithfulness and ongoing commitment to the camp. Your support in terms of prayer, volunteering, and donations is what makes the ministry possible. Without your care, we would not be able to provide all the wonderful things that Mar-Lu-Ridge does and has offered for generations.

As we journey through this new year together, may we find ourselves equally uplifted and edified by the strength and peace that we have found in one another this past year, and that God blesses us with by God’s grace. May we pray for all those whose lives have been forever changed by the pandemic. And may we continue to pray for those who work and serve for the well-being, health, and safety of all.

May the blessing of God be with you and yours now and always.

Blessings,

The Rev. Matthew C. Fuhrman  
President



Bread Ministry – serving body and soul

**A message from the Executive Director:**

I will begin with a prayer of thanks for our community's continued support and prayers during what has proven to be a year like no other! Even in the midst of COVID, God is present.

We were able to serve 2,000 people through small retreats, winter retreats before COVID, and cabin camping. While this number is far lower than typical, we are grateful for the opportunities to offer hospitality. It was a joy to welcome families into our cabins and lodge for time away, campfires, swimming, hiking, and rest. Dozens of camper families used the opportunity to get a taste of summer camp for their children, and we were so glad to see them enjoying the Ridge in this new way.

Our Service core value came into play as we hosted the Emergency Family Shelter for the Religious Coalition of Frederick County during June and July. With the help of our chef, Tim Waskiewicz, and our baker, Paulette Harvey, we began a Bread Ministry. We

have served congregations and community groups in local areas and in Baltimore, providing food for body and soul. To date, Paulette has baked over 20,000 rolls and loaves.

It was a joy to offer MLR at Home this summer. Sharing God's love with our campers and their families in this new way brought us moments of normalcy and was a gift to our staff. You can read more about this program in Amy's report that follows.

Our first online Auction was great fun, and an opportunity to reach new people through this virtual event. We showcased beautiful handmade goods from our community members and staff, and an evening of community celebration helped us all Give Thanks!

We worked very hard to cut costs and to utilize the PPP loan we received, as well as two legacy gifts, to pay for staff payroll, summer staff payroll and lodging, and employee benefits. Knowing that we had dependable monthly income from a host of dedicated donors was a relief, and it is appreciated more than I can express. Our donors and congregations really stepped up to fill the void of lost retreat and summer camp revenue, and it was humbling and gratifying to witness.

As we enter a new year, I know that our challenges are not fully behind us, but we are on solid ground because of our synod support, our generous and faithful donor community, and our ability to serve in new ways. We thank God for the strong foundation of community here at Mar-Lu-Ridge.

God's peace,

Sarah Lefler  
Executive Director



## **Associate Director's Report**

This summer was very strange, to say the least. Having decided to forgo on-site camp mid-May, we moved forward with plans for online content, staff community building, and family cabin rentals. I feel that we did an excellent job providing for the needs of our community this summer, considering the circumstances. We continued to live out our mission statement each day, which has grounded us through very unprecedented and trying times.

Our theme this summer was "God Shows Up." Each week we focused on a different area of our lives where we can see God continuing to show up, even in the midst of hardship. We explored how God shows up in Creation, The Church, Community, Justice, and You & Me. I was so impressed with how well everything came together, especially considering the time constraints we were working with. We had 6 pastors and one vicar volunteer to be "Pastors of the week," for which they contributed some pieces to our twice-weekly worships and participated in the Zoom sessions with our campers and staff. This was such a great way for everyone to connect, and it went over very well with campers and families!

Here is an overview of what we've been up to this summer:

*Online Content (MLR at Home)* – During the month of June, our staff worked in 5 different program teams to create content that we used throughout the summer. We had the MLR at Home page on our website, where families could view games, campfire skits, nature activities, and crafts. Our bi-weekly worships were posted on Facebook each Sunday & Thursday as well. We had roughly 30 campers participate in our online Zoom sessions with staff, playing games & having Bible study discussions. We were very active on social media this summer as well, posting a new "Monday Morning Word with Bre" each week, "Nature Gwynsdays," and even letting some of our summer staff takeover the Instagram a few times. We got a lot of engagement from campers in this way, which was so great to see!

*Maintenance Camp* – We had ten staff members join us on-site for three weeks of work projects, worship, discussion, and community-building, which we affectionately called "maintenance camp." They were able to complete so many projects around camp with the guidance of our maintenance staff. Camp is looking beautiful these days! Additionally, part of our time was devoted to discussions around creating more inclusive spaces, specifically for people of color and the LGBTQ community. I am so grateful to the 2020 staff for the ways in which they were unafraid to dive into heavy conversations. Their passion for justice and inclusion was evident in every discussion, and it was all grounded in their love and care for Mar-Lu-Ridge and the MLR community.

Overall, it was a challenging and rewarding summer, and I thank each of you for your continued support through it all. Our theme verse for this summer comes from

Matthew 28:20, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." I know that the grace of God goes with us, wherever we are, and whatever challenges life throws at us.

In God's Peace,

Amy Mambu  
Associate Director

## **Financial Report for 2020**

Mar-Lu-Ridge continued operating throughout 2020 even though the Covid-19 pandemic imposed some constraints. Many of the ministerial services MLR traditionally provides were delivered by alternative methods. Indeed, the pandemic environment required MLR's staff and Board to create new ways of delivering ministerial services to sustain its mission. In many ways, MLR is converting itself into more of an outreach and retreat ministry while continuing to offer its traditional summer camp programs. While endeavoring to survive was a theme of the year 2020, creating new programmatic ways to sustain itself is an important strategy as MLR moves forward.

For the year, MLR realized a \$45,220 operating loss. This operating loss matched the projected loss budgeted before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Operating expenses were \$570,831 and total income was \$525,785. Both income and expenses were an approximate \$179,000 less than budgeted. These results were all directly attributable to the pandemic operating environment.

Contribution and grant income of \$412,224 enabled MLR's management and board to sustain operations and retain employed staff throughout the year 2020. No MLR staff were furloughed or had their compensation commitments reduced. Many other similarly situated enterprises were forced to implement operating curtailment strategies because of the Covid-19 breakout. MLR's Board believes retaining its current staff is critical to the continuing success of this ministry.

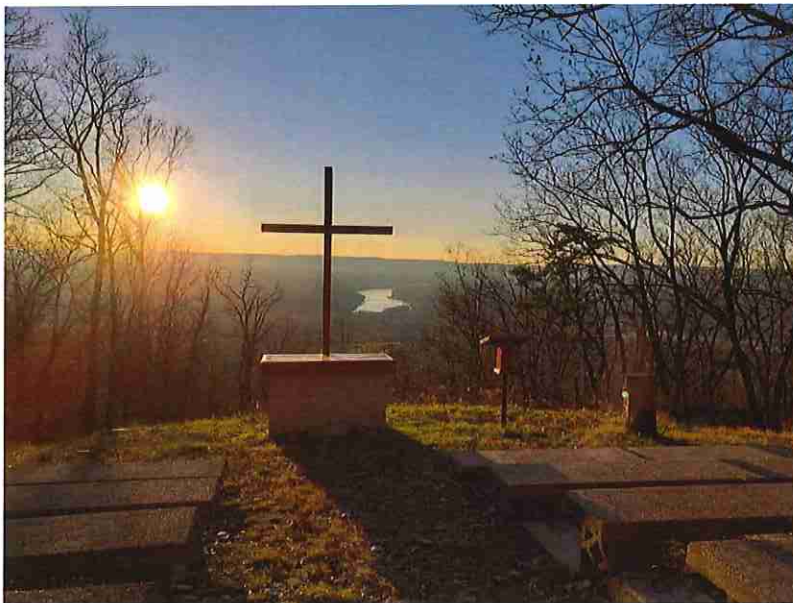
MLR remains dependent on donations, grants and Synodical support to meet its expenses. Fortunately, God continues to generously bless the Camp with congregations and individuals, staff and volunteers who are dedicated to supporting its vital ministry. As always, your financial support and earnest prayers are essential and very much appreciated by everyone who experiences Mar-Lu-Ridge. Ken Anderson, BOD Treasurer

**Income for 2020**

Contributions	\$308,581
Grant Income	\$103,643
Other Camp Uses	\$65,699
Summer Camp Operations	\$51,509
DE/MD Synod	\$11,350
Metro DC Synod	\$5,500
Camp Scholarship Income	\$5,191
Agape Hall Mortgage Donations	\$3,645
Store Income	\$1,705
Other Income	\$13,638
Refunds	-\$44,676
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$525,785</b>

**Expenses for 2020**

Camp Operations	\$79,883
Staff	\$342,436
Utilities	\$45,441
Maintenance	\$52,575
Agape Hall Mortgage Payments	\$25,576
Insurance	\$24,920
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$570,831</b>
<b>Operating Loss of</b>	<b>\$45,046</b>



**Mountaintopper: Gifts of \$5,000 +**

Ken Anderson & Joan Enerson  
Larry & Lynn Ries  
Carol Johnson estate  
Rev. Chris Ramsey estate  
Delaware-Maryland Synod  
Metro DC Synod  
Grace LC, Westminster  
Zion ELC, Middletown

**Ridge Runners: Gifts of \$1,000 - \$4,999**

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Lord of Life LC, Fairfax  
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Phoenix Noise & Vibration  
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St. John LC, Westminster  
St. Luke's ELC, Frederick  
St. Mark's LC WELCA,  
Springfield  
St. Paul's LC, Walkersville

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Petko & Maria Arnaoudova  
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Grace LC, Lutherville  
Good Shepherd LC, Alexandria  
St. Paul LC, Jefferson

Trinity LC, Taneytown

**Ridge Climbers: Gifts of \$100  
- \$249**

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Brittany Ashe  
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Madison Baber  
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Prince of Peace LC, Baltimore  
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St. Michael LC, Baltimore  
St. Paul LC, Funkstown  
St. Peter's LC, Baltimore  
Zion LC, Williamsport

**Memorial gifts given in  
loving memory/honor of:**

Harry Yost  
Jean Webster  
Rev. Fred Gross  
Ethel Huffman  
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Paul Walker  
Dorene Young  
Richard Young

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Phil. 1:3