



2021 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.

Board of Directors:

Rev. Matthew Fuhrman, President
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Bishop Leila Ortiz
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Ms. Caitlin Muhlbach
Rev. Dan Roschke
Ms. Amy Mambu – Assoc. Director

Community – Service - Sanctuary



Community Worship in Salem on the Mountain Chapel

"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 12 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 2021, we received over \$5,290.00! This has been a tremendous blessing each month, and we deeply appreciate you choosing our ministry for these donations.

Thrivent Action Teams are another blessing to our ministry. Members sponsored our Advent Family Gathering, Work Day, Summer Camp supplies, Cabin boxes for campers, Health Kits supplies, and Cabin painting projects. Thank you for sharing your generosity!

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
Ms. Carol Johnson*
Rev. Donald and Mrs. Miriam Keyser
Mr. Mark Huffman
Mr. David and Mrs. Judy Price
Mrs. Sandy Banko
Mrs. Margaret Powers*

From the President of our Board of Directors:

I am not really a bumper sticker person. But I do have one proudly displayed on my car; a green and white oval sticker placed on the center of my back bumper which reads "MLR." (Proudly purchased and available at the Mar-Lu-Ridge store!) As I drive around, I often wonder how many people see it and recognize those initials. And if they do recognize them, do they bring to mind happy memories of time spent there as camper or counselor, or perhaps time when they attended a church retreat held there. Perhaps as a parent they sent their child to camp there one summer, or took a Scout troop or other organization to use the facility as part of their programming. There are any number of ways that Mar-Lu-Ridge may have been a part of their life, connecting them with others, and through the beauty and majesty of its surroundings, connecting them with God. People for whom the initials MLR spell out more than just Mar-Lu-Ridge, but rather it stands for a special place that for over 60 years has helped bring people together to grow in faith, service and community.

Even amid the challenges of the last two years, the work and mission of the camp has remained strong and faithful. This is in no small part due to the dedication and commitment of its staff and volunteers who give so selflessly to ensure that future generations may come to find the same special place that so many of us have come to love, and so that others may know all that stands behind MLR and its long history.

Giving thanks to the leadership that Sarah Lefler brings as the Executive Director, and the outstanding work of her team, the Board of Directors looks forward to working with her in visioning where God will continue to lead this ministry post-pandemic, and into its next chapter of ministry. Outreach and building back programs, continuing to foster a culture of welcome and inclusion, financial stability and security of the camp, and addressing infrastructure upgrades are among some of the items on which we continue to focus.

For all those who help contribute to the faithful witness of the camp in all the many and diverse ways that MLR's greater community comes together, thank you for your time, donations, hard work, and prayers.

It is an exciting time to see what God has in store for this important part of God's Creation that we call MLR.

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

The Rev. Matthew C. Fuhrman
President, Mar-Lu-Ridge Board of Directors



Camp community – Building lifelong friendships

A message from the Executive Director:

While the continuing struggles of 2021 related to the pandemic brought many sorrows, we also found many reasons to rejoice. We know that God is very present, and that was evident as we successfully hosted campers again and welcomed back large retreat groups. Each person who spent time on the Ridge brought their own burdens to lay down, and their own joys to share. We feel humbled to continue this ministry that touches people from all walks of life, and allows space for God to walk alongside people on their faith journey.

The retreat guests began to arrive in larger and larger groups as the year went on, and we served over 2,350 people: youth groups, adult mentoring groups, church councils and Scouts. Many families came to rent cabins again and found peace and relaxation among the trees. The campfires brought folks together as community, and our hospitality allowed our guests to feel nourished and cared for in a genuine way.

The heart of our ministry, our summer camp, happened with zero incidents of COVID after much careful planning, and we give thanks to God for that joy. The campers brought their laughter and enthusiasm, their fears and struggles, their whole selves to this place. A place where they know they are loved and accepted as precious children of God.

Our summer staff was small but filled with love and leadership as they provided a unique, safe, fun-filled camp experience for everyone.

One of the year's best celebrations centered around the Conservation Easement with the State of Maryland. After 5 years of hard work, the easement was secured, helping to preserve all 455 acres of Mar-Lu-Ridge land forever. The decision to enter into this agreement is in keeping with our mission statement, which reads in part, "...and encourages care of God's creation." We feel that preserving the natural state of our forests, streams, ponds and flora will provide habitat for wildlife, and an outdoor sanctuary for our community for generations to come. The Board of Directors voted unanimously to enter into the agreement on January 31, 2020.

We acknowledge the Piscataway tribes, who utilized this land for hunting and shelter, and the many families who utilized the forests as woodlots and the open space as farmland prior to the sale of the land to the Maryland Synod in 1959. We remain committed to stewarding the property and its resources in keeping with the mission of Mar-Lu-Ridge, and with the details set forth in our easement. Together, we have secured the future of Mar-Lu-Ridge for generations to come. Thanks be to God!

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 and familiar 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

I am incredibly grateful for all the blessings our MLR community has experienced this camping season. It has been an absolute joy to have the sounds of campers' laughter and singing fill our beloved camp once again. This summer was not without its challenges, but we worked hard to follow all COVID protocols and it was wonderful to be doing what we do best once again.

Our theme this summer was "Created with Care," in which we explored God's Good Creation and our call to be good stewards of all God's gifts. We focused on the themes of water, land and plants, animals, and humans – learning more about each element of Creation and what we can do to better care for it. Our campers and staff explored what Jesus' "Living Water" means (John 4:10). We shared our Land Acknowledgement, remembering that we are not the first inhabitants of this home. We marveled at the wonder of all God's critters, thankful for their lessons of patience and trust. We embraced our call to love one another, and explored what it means to "lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

We had 207 camper registrations this summer, with a total of 180 participants. Our dedicated staff of 15 young adults led with faith and enthusiasm.

I had the wonderful opportunity to complete my Clinical Pastoral Education this summer, which meant I took on a new role as the Summer Camp Chaplain. This was a challenging and enriching experience for me. I am so grateful for Liam Fyfe, Program Coordinator, who was able to take on some of my regular Associate Director duties, to free up more time for me to provide pastoral care for our campers and staff.

Thank you all for your continued support of this ministry. As my time at Mar-Lu-Ridge ends, I am just so grateful for the experiences I have had and the people I have met here. I have grown in my understandings of ministry and what it means to be the Church. I have gained confidence and found my voice as a leader in this community. I have built relationships that I believe will continue to bloom and grow. Thank you, thank you, for your prayers and support as I take this next step. God be with you, until we meet again.

In God's Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Mambu".

Amy Mambu

Financial Report for 2021

During 2021, Mar-Lu-Ridge began the return to regular operations, even as it faced a second year of pandemic-imposed restrictions. In-person summer camp sessions re-opened at roughly half of their pre-Covid capacity, with the result that summer camp revenue (net of refunds) more than tripled relative to 2020. Similarly, revenues from retreats and other camp usage (net of refunds) more than doubled relative to 2020. MLR operations also benefitted from the forgiveness of two Federal Payroll Protection Program loans, a government policy designed to avoid pandemic-induced layoffs.

Over the year as a whole, MLR realized an operating loss of \$103,501, which was off-set by funds from the Conservation Easement as we worked to rebuild business income in the midst of COVID.

The Conservation Easement contract from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources has provided a long-run benefit to MLR operations and upholds our mission statement. In March 2021, Mar-Lu-Ridge was formally included in the State's Project Open Space program and all 455 acres of property stewarded and operated by Mar-Lu-Ridge are now protected. The funds received have been used to finance both the 2021 operating loss and a long-term capital endowment fund.

To meet financial challenges going forward, MLR remains dependent on donations, grants, and Synodical support as well as increased revenue from retreats and camps 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.

Dr. Julianne Nelson

Treasurer, Mar-Lu-Ridge Board of Directors

<u>Income</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Contributions	\$ 179,113	\$ 308,581
Grant Income	\$ 5,900	\$ 103,643
Other Camp Usage	\$ 100,639	\$ 65,699
Summer Camp Operations	\$ 86,143	\$ 51,509
DE/MD Synod	\$ 10,350	\$ 11,350
Metro DC Synod	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,500
Camp Scholarship Funds	\$ 12,592	\$ 5,191
Agape Hall Mortgage Donations	\$ 8,130	\$ 3,645
Store Income	\$ 4,344	\$ 1,705
Other Income	\$ 18,473	\$ 14,161
Refunds	\$ (7,915)	\$ (44,676)
Federal Payroll Protection Grants	\$ 117,362	
Total Operating Income	\$ 541,132	\$ 526,307
Expenses		
Camp Operations	\$ 123,397	\$ 64,305
Staff Salaries, Benefits	\$ 289,652	\$ 294,377
Payroll & Property Taxes	\$ 20,433	\$ 23,344
Services & Insurance	\$ 74,636	\$ 59,177
Utilities	\$ 58,362	\$ 51,332
Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 49,749	\$ 53,097
Agape Hall Mortgage Payments	\$ 28,404	\$ 25,576
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 644,633	\$ 571,208
Net Operating Income	\$ (103,501)	\$ (44,900)



Mountaintopper (\$5,000+)

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Harmony Community Lutheran
Church, Myersville
Abiding Presence Lutheran
Church, Burke
Peoples' Community Lutheran
Church, Baltimore

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Baltimore
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Emmaus of the Eastern Panhandle
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Zion Lutheran Church,
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Sarah Lefler
Amy Mambu
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Brian Wachter
Dr. Paul Walker
Dorene & Richard Young

I thank my God
every time I
remember you.
Phil. 1:3