

The FRIEDENSWORD

Camp Friedenswald

Volume 34, Issue 1: Spring/Summer 2026

Camp Friedenswald provides people of all ages the opportunity to grow in relationship with God, self, others and nature.

Reflections from the Director

by Jenna Liechty Martin

“The world is a big ball of chaos ...”

This is the observation that a summer staff member shared in response to the question: “Why do you want to work at Camp Friedenswald this summer?”

I cannot argue with her. I, too, am confronted with the evidence each time I pick up my phone and scan the day’s headlines. Stories of war, unjust immigration policies, dehumanization of “the other,” a climate changing beyond the point of return ... As my mind tries to make sense of the senseless, my body grows tense, something in me withers. Yes, the world is a big ball of chaos.

I wish there would be an antidote, or at least a way to propel us more quickly through the chaos to get to a place where something more settled, more just, more peaceful, is emerging. I imagine we all long for this. And yet I’m afraid there is no “solving” or rushing us through the chaos that is unfolding. The question then, as I see it, is how shall we live amidst the chaos? How do we carry on without being overcome?

I have a strong sense that the peaceful woods has something to offer us as we hold and live with these questions.

While I know a week, or even an entire summer, at Camp Friedenswald will not “solve” the chaos of these days, I believe it can provide an antidote to the heaviness that many of us carry. Camp may not be able to change the world around us, but it can provide something that helps to make the living of these days *lighter*. I recall a pastor who recently spent time walking the trails at camp. “The peaceful woods are healing,” he shared. There is something in these woods that offers gifts of healing, wisdom and mercy; there is something we deeply need.

When our lives feel chaotic and the world seems to be falling apart ...

... We need places where we can root our feet firmly into the soil and be reminded that the earth is steady beneath our feet.

... We need places that instill hope within us, where signs of life and beauty persist through greening shoots and blooming wildflowers.

... We need welcoming communities that cultivate care, compassion and connection, through the coming together of strangers to live together in a cabin for a week, then leave as friends.

... We need intergenerational relationships where gifts can be freely shared, and received, and where all people know their inherent value.

... We need experiences that tap into our sense of wonder and awe, awakening our senses, and opening us to encounter the great Mystery beyond ourselves.

In just a few weeks, over 30 summer staff will arrive at Camp Friedenswald, ready to learn, grow and serve together. Each of them has their own story to tell, and reasons they feel called to spend the summer in the peaceful woods. Many of them come carrying the weight of the “big ball of chaos,” and seeking something to counter the heaviness they bear. I am hopeful they will find it. I am hopeful that in the land, the trees, the waters and the community of people, they will receive blessings of joy and love that help them carry on. I believe these blessings are freely offered and available to us all.

Pictured: The compass plant, an endangered species in Michigan, blooms in the summer prairie at Camp (2025). Its distinctive lobed leaves orient north-south.

Summer 2026: Walkin' in Wonder

by Gwen Gustafson-Zook

The story of Jesus is one filled with wonder and awe ... and walking! From the awe-filled response of shepherds watching their flocks by night in the starry field who respond to the angels by walking "with haste" to find the the babe in the manger — to the post-resurrection, curiosity-inspired response of those walking on the road to Emmaus, the story of Jesus is chock full of wonder and walking. The underlying encouragement through it all is an invitation to join the adventure by walkin' in wonder — to pay attention, to exercise curiosity, to be astonished and to live in expectant hope.



This summer at Camp Friedenswald we are going to practice Walkin' in Wonder. So what is this Walkin' in Wonder about?

Year-round Staff

Vicki Archer, *Dishwasher*
Eric Emerson, *Food Service Director*
Heather Emerson, *Housekeeper*
Jonathan Fridley, *Facilities Director*
Erica Friesen, *Administrative Assistant*
Andrea Golden, *Accountant*
Gwen Gustafson-Zook, *Program Director*
Janessa Hostetler, *Kitchen Assistant*
Jeremy Hostetler, *Facilities Assistant*
Amy Huser, *Sustainability & Outdoor Education Director*
Hannah Lehman, *Assistant Program Director*
Jenna Liechty Martin, *Executive Director*
Alena Miller, *Sustainability Assistant*
Anita & Paul Pawelski, *Guest Hosts*
Pat Pusko, *Housekeeper*
Elizabeth Schwartz, *Housekeeper*
Jess Whicker, *Guest Services Director*

Board of Directors

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Contact us:

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Cassopolis, MI 49031
269.476.9744
camp@friedenswald.org
www.friedenswald.org

Moving? Need to update your address? Please let us know!



Walkin' in Wonder ... is about taking cues from Jesus' life among his disciples to empower us to live our lives (also known as: live out our faith!) perpetually tuned into the presence of the HOLY in our midst.

Walkin' in Wonder ... is nurturing AWE as we pay attention to the shimmering of Divinity made known to us at the tip of each leaf, in the eyes of a friend, in the call of the sandhill crane.

Walkin' in Wonder ... is about nurturing an orientation toward life energized by curiosity and delight and courage.

Walkin' in Wonder ... is about noticing details as we look for — and honor — the Holy in our midst.

Walkin' in Wonder ... is about tuning into the mystery we call the Divine, the Holy, God.

Walkin' in Wonder ... is experiencing a journey of faith.

This summer, through an exploration of Jesus' wonder-filled life and an exploration of the wonder-filled world around us, we will lean into WONDER through honing our sensitivity to awe, curiosity, courage and attention in the pursuit of bearing witness to the Holy in and around us all the time.

We hope you'll join us as we embark on a season of *Walkin' in Wonder* at Camp Friedenswald!



Sustain Friedenswald



Thanks to the generosity and support of so many Camp supporters, over \$2.7 million has been committed to the Campaign to Sustain Friedenswald toward our goal of \$3.3 million. We are well on our way to helping Sustain Friedenswald for future generations of campers. You can read more and follow our progress at Friedenswald.org/sustain-friedenswald/. We are especially grateful for the volunteers who helped paint the Hugel Haus (staff home) earlier this year. We are excited to have this refreshed home for two staff to move into this spring. Thank you!

Pictured: Janessa and Jeremy Hostetler prepare to move into the renovated Hugel Haus (spring 2026).

2025: Highlights of our work and life in the peaceful woods

Alongside serving over 8,000 people throughout the year, we took steps toward living into our pillars of place, formation, justice and resilience. Highlights of our work together are described below and serve as an encouragement to keep taking things one step at a time. You can view the full report on our website, along with our updated 2026-28 strategic plan.

Pillar 1: PLACE

- 580+ hours committed to land stewardship
- Opened an apiary and began beekeeping
- Over 28,600 meals were served in the dining hall, with local produce from Corey Lake Orchard served in the summer
- Camp Staff toured the Dowagiac River restoration site, led by Pokagon Band Kowabdanawa odë ké director, Jennifer Kanine
- Honored and celebrated Camp's 75th anniversary



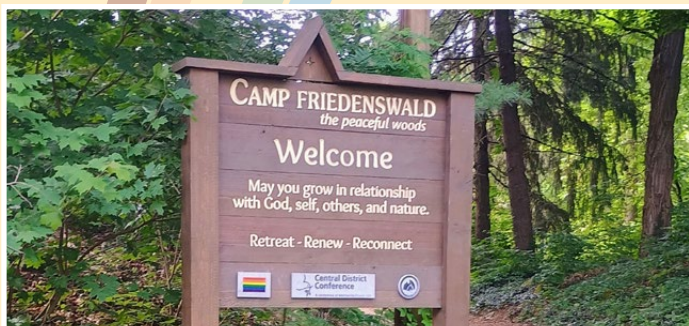
Pillar 2: FORMATION

- A record-setting 729 campers attended a summer program focused on *The Wisdom of Trees: Instructions for Living* (pictured below)
- Held six retreats throughout the year from Winter Camps to Restoration Retreat, including a new "Sacred Connections" knitting retreat in spring 2025
- Hosted 24 church gatherings throughout the year (19 of them Mennonite churches)
- 2,100+ students and chaperones were served through Camp's outdoor education program



Pillar 3: JUSTICE

- Trail marker placed on Main Trail, acknowledging it was once part of an extensive network of Indigenous trails
- Over \$20,000 provided in program scholarships
- Five groups joined the "Zero Waste Club" as part of our food waste awareness challenge
- 46 solar panels installed at Lakeview Lodge
- Installed six new electric vehicle charging stations across Camp
- Salvaged wood from renovation projects for other projects (i.e., compost cubes!)



Pillar 4: RESILIENCE

- 818 days of service given by volunteers: Thank you!
- Completed construction of a new "green" staff duplex (Fenwood) and renovations to Sycamore Lodge
- Over \$2.7 million pledged or given toward the Campaign to Sustain Friedenswald
- Annual giving by churches and individuals provided essential support in running programs throughout the year
- Welcomed 31 summer staff to our team to carry out the summer program



CAMP FRIEDENSWALD BUILDERS

The people, congregations and organizations listed contributed to Camp Friedenswald as Builders from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025. If you gave during this time and your name does not appear or is listed incorrectly, please accept our apologies and notify Jenna Liechty Martin. Thank you for your faithful support!

WHO IS A BUILDER?

A Builder is someone who believes in the work of Camp Friedenswald and is committed to supporting its mission by providing essential financial support (\$500 or more annually) and/or volunteering five or more days each year. See www.friedenswald.org/get-involved/ for more!



Anonymous
 John Alter & Sueann VonGunten
 Jan Althaus
 Jeremy & Amber Amstutz
 Portia Amstutz
 Philip & Andrea Arner
 Sylvia Aschliman
 Rachel Augspurger
 J.O. & Elizabeth Augspurger
 Don Augspurger
 Walter & Lynette Bachman
 Wendell Badertscher & Esther Nafziger
 Jim & Lois Bare
 Helen Bargaen*
 Scott & Nancy Baum
 Richard & Marjorie Baum*
 Leon Bauman & Char Yutzky
 Jim & Naomi Baumgartner
 Howard Baumgartner*
 Justin & Erin Beeker
 Ted & Gretta Beitler
 Terry Berg & Cathy Beery Berg
 Hilary Bertsche*
 John & Evelyn Bertsche Bequest
 Bethany Christian Schools
 Allan & Marie Blunt
 Dick Boehr
 Jeff & Beth Boehr
 Michael & Connie Brandt
 Jeremy & Carli Braun
 Tim Braun & Alysha Liljeqvist
 Henry & Sara Braun
 Jeff & Patricia Buhr
 Sheryl Burkhalter
 Tim & Brenda Byers
 Ron Byler & Mim Shirk
 Sam Carpenter & Alison Schumacher
 Virgil & Louise Claassen
 Joenita & Stan* Clemens
 Roger & Linda Clemmons
 Richard & Kathleen Collins
 Mike & Stephanie Company
 Carol Connelly
 John Courtney
 Brad & Ellie Covert
 Doug Cripe
 Jack & Katherine DeLee
 Ryan & Alicia DeMarco
 Lu Derstine
 Belle Duerksen & Lew Naylor*
 Alex & Emma Dugger
 Skip Dyes & Wendy Walker
 Alan Ediger
 Mike & Mary Edmiston
 Phil & Cindy Eicher

Jim & Linda Eicher
 Kirk & Heather Eicher-Miller
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 Patrick Estell
 David & Suzanne Estvanko
 Gail & Nancy Fisher
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 Jonathan & Julie Fridley
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 Erica Friesen
 Ivan & Rachel Friesen
 Billy Funk & Alita Yoder
 Barbra Gant
 Ned Geiser & Marie Harnish
 Ted & Beth Gerber
 Marlin Gerber
 John Gerber
 Rose Gerber Emery
 Elinor Gerig
 Daniel & Jan Gingerich
 Joel & Barbara Graber
 Peter & Mary Graber
 Jonathan & Phoebe Graber
 Joe & Jilaine Graber
 Cal & Sharon Graber
 Julia Graber & Raphael LaFrance
 Erik Grayvold & Angela Moore
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 Ben Gundy & Jennifer Ruth
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 Gary & Carla Habegger
 Mike & Gwen Habegger
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 Rollin & Debra Handrich
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 Steve & Lori Hartman-Keiser
 Tim & Marybeth Hartzler
 Matt & Jen Hartzler
 Greg & Laura Hartzler
 Doug & Sarah Hartzler
 Kelly Hartzler & Manoel Couder
 Wilbur & Elizabeth Hershberger
 Galen & Karen Hershberger
 Stefan & Karen Hershberger
 Hal Hess & Christine Schumacher
 Rex & Angie Hochstedler
 Ruby Hochstedler
 Mary Hofstetter
 Mark & Beth Hooley
 Jim & Sandi Hostetler

Hans Houshower
 Steve & Mary Beth Huser
 Amy Huser
 Matthew and Julie Huser
 Kevin & Tonya Jaberg
 Steve & Jan Johnson
 Barry & Janeen Bertsche Johnson
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 Armon & Bernie Kauffman
 Terry & Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger
 Bethany & Steve Keener
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 Titus King & Joy Kauffman King
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 Jim & Vicky Kirkton
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 Ted Koontz & Gayle Gerber Koontz
 Elsie Koop Liechty
 Hesston & Jean Lauver
 George & Anita Lehman
 Scott & Greta Lehman
 Jeff & Sharon Lehman
 Mary Lehman Yoder
 Kate & Will Liechty
 Edward & Mary Liechty
 John & Joy Liechty
 Floyd & Renee Liechty
 Nancy Liechty Loewen
 Douglas & Mary Liechty-Caskey
 Todd & Lisa Liechty-Steele
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 Jane Litwiller & Molly Kauffman
 Dorothy Loepp
 Ronald & Alice Lora
 Tim & Cindy Luginbill
 Doug & Paula Luginbill
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 Wesley Mark & Mary Harder
 David Mark
 Deb Martens
 Peter Martin & Jenna Liechty Martin
 Daryl & Karen Martin
 Krista & Craig Mast
 John Mattson & Lucretia Wilson Mattson
 Rodney Maust & Martha Yoder Maust
 Ray & Mary Maynard
 James Mclnerney
 Moser Motor Sales
 Pete & Cheryl Roscher Mikinka
 Brent Miller & Megan Stauffer-Miller

Rae Ann Miller
 Tina Miller
 Darren Miller & Anna Ruth
 Hershberger
 Imogene Miller
 Evan Miller
 Edward* & Twila Miller
 David & Mary Miller
 Roger Miller
 Phil & Karen Miller Rush
 Mary Ann Moman
 Mary Anne Moser
 Chris Moser & Carmen
 Ordonez
 David Moser & Ingrid Friesen
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 Moser Motor Sales
 John & Lois Hess Nafziger
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 David Nester
 Kevin & Kendra Nickel
 Andrew Nussbaum
 Jerry & Virginia Nussbaum
 Phil & Maribeth Nyce
 Jack Paxton & Sharon Monday
 Luke Penner & Rachel Yoder
 Penner
 Wilbert & Ruth Penner
 Tanner Pinks
 Scott & Judy Preheim
 Peter & Jodi Quint
 Douglas & Paulette Reichenbach
 Eric & Jennifer Reichenbach
 Brian & Heather Bachman
 Reichenbach

Lamar Reichert
 Jack Reimer
 John & Kay Reimer
 Deanna Risser
 Denise Risser
 James & Christina Rissler
 Andrew Rissler
 Mark & Jane Roeschley
 Randy & Mary Roth
 Tom & Sue Schaaf
 Lisa Schirch & William Goldberg
 LaVerne* & Carol Schirch
 Rickey Schrag
 Joe & Mary Schrock
 Roger & Nathalie Schrock
 Tim & JP Schumacher
 Tom J. & Joyce Schumacher
 Kian & Hannah Searcy
 Jane Sears
 Cheryl Severa
 Amy & Jeff Shadbolt
 Shavehead Lake Association
 Terry & Kay Sheets
 Elisabeth Shelly
 Karl & Michelle Shelly
 Anne & Philip Shenk
 Dale & Trish Shenk
 Jim & Kay Sommer
 Jonathan & Anne Marie Spelman
 Margaret & Phillip Sprunger
 Norman Sprunger
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 Joel & Teri Steinmetz

Jackson Steinmetz
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 Jerry & Nancy Suter
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 Kevin & Marcia Trent
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 Josh & Paige Troyer
 Doug & Jolene VonGunten
 Byron & Connie Warkentin
 Jim & Jane Weaver
 Justin & Lyz Weaver
 Joshua Weaver & Julia Gingrich
 Barry Weaver & Marjorie Martin
 Weaver
 Curtis & Shelly Weaverdyck
 Sarah Werner
 Robert Wheeler
 Brian & Brenda Wiebe
 Dan & Kathleen Wilson
 Diane Wiman
 Penny Yarman
 Allen & Marie Yoder*
 Kent & Gaye Yoder
 Kendra Yoder & David Lind
 Jim & Sandra Yoder
 Lucille Zimmerman
 Bob Zook
 *Deceased

CHURCHES

Assembly Mennonite Church
 Belmont Mennonite Church
 Berkey Avenue Mennonite
 Church
 Bethany Christian Schools
 Community Mennonite Church
 Eighth Street Mennonite Church
 Emmaus Road Mennonite
 Fellowship
 First Mennonite Church of
 Bluffton
 First Mennonite Church of
 Sugarcreek
 First Mennonite Church of
 Champaign-Urbana
 Grace Mennonite Church
 Hively Avenue Mennonite
 Church
 Maplewood Mennonite Church
 Mennonite Church of Normal
 North Danvers Mennonite
 Church
 Oak Grove Mennonite Church
 Prairieview Mennonite Church
 Salem Mennonite Church
 Silverwood Mennonite Church

*Volunteers pictured far left from top to
 bottom: Bonita Suter; JP Schumacher
 and Char Sprunger; and Phil Eicher*

ESTATE GIFTS

In 2025 Camp Friedenswald was the recipient of several generous estate gifts. We remember the lives of these individuals and are grateful for their foresight and generous spirits that are reflected in their final gifts to Camp Friedenswald. These gifts will support current and forthcoming capital projects that will help sustain Camp's mission into the future.

Eldon & Helen Bargan served at Camp in the 1960s. During that time Eldon built treehouses at the Round Lake campsite while Helen ran the snack shop. Helen was also featured in the camp film from that decade, "Time out with God." Many campers from Camp's early years remember the Bargas and their lasting impact.

Richard (Dick) & Marjorie Baum credit camp for bringing them together, as they first met at Camp Mack (Milford, IN), the site used before Camp Friedenswald was founded. Throughout their lifetimes, the Baums generously supported and championed the ministry of the Mennonite church and camping in significant ways. They believed in the impact that Camp Friedenswald could have on the lives of young people and have left a lasting legacy in the peaceful woods.

Robert (Bob) & Mary Kauffman were involved with Camp from its early years, with Bob helping with formative construction projects and Mary serving as a camp nurse in the summer. They believed in the value of a church camping experience and exposed their children to Camp from an early age, helping to create many fond family memories. They hope their final gift to Camp will help ensure that future campers can create their own lasting memories.

Vernon & Shirley King each have a Camp story to tell. Shirley experienced Friedenswald as a young camper, building long-lasting friendships. When they moved to Goshen (IN) in retirement, Vernon connected as a regular volunteer, sharing his depth of construction and woodworking experience. He gave over 230 days as a volunteer in his final decade of life. Camp has been deeply impacted by Vernon's many gifts given in life and by their final gift as a couple.

Roy & Carol Sprunger instilled a love of Camp Friedenswald in their children and grandchildren. During his life Roy shared his construction and woodworking skills, while Carol served as Camp's first cook in 1951 (see *The Friedensword*, Spring 2025, page 1). Their connections and contributions to Camp spanned decades. Carol died in 2025, and her final gift to Camp will help replace equipment in the Camp kitchen.

Allen & Marie Yoder were deeply committed to the Mennonite church and its ministries, including Camp Friedenswald. Throughout their lifetimes, and then in their final legacy gift, they supported Camp, helping shape the Camp Friedenswald we know today. We are deeply grateful for their vision and generosity.




2026 SUMMER & FALL SCHEDULE



- High School:** June 14-19
- Junior High:** June 21-26
- Pre-Junior:** June 28 - July 1
- Junior:** July 5-10
- Family Camp I:** July 13-17
- Builders Weekend:** July 18-19
- Family Camp II:** July 20-24
- Family Camp III:** July 27-31
- Women's Retreat:** September 18-20
- Restoration Retreat:** October 23-25

For registration and scholarship info, please visit Friedenswald.org

Read and Recycle 

Return Service Requested

15406 Watercross Way
Cassopolis, MI 49031

