

We have been blown away by the outpouring of generosity and the creative innovation during the pandemic response. In an unprecedented time where schools, sports and so many summer plans have been cancelled – including camps, Country Lake has been faced with swiftly adapting to new regulations and employing our own creativity and innovation... not to find a creative loop-hole, but rather to consider all of the many safety practices that have been offered or recommended by various agencies, while still honoring the gathering restrictions for the state of Indiana. It would be easy to project criticism due to contradictions in those guidelines and information that changes often, but in a spirit of humility and unity, we recognize the collective desire for public safety, the significance of this virus and the fact that, even with the best of intentions, new information could cause a widespread shutdown or increased restrictions at any time.

We also recognize the social, mental and emotional strain the last few months have had on our society and we believe that now, more than ever, the need for summer camps, retreats and activities that provide exercise and relational engagement is at an all-time high.

For the past 20 years, Country Lake has operated as a resource to ministry organizations as well as the community as a rental facility that also offers the benefits of well trained staff and lifeguards to facilitate adventure-style activities as well as a beach and pool for water recreation.

With a 200 acre property and over 680 beds, Country Lake is in a unique position to offer an environment that promotes safe hygiene and supports distancing recommendations – especially for retreats. We are also modifying our food service operation and dining in such a manner that we actually exceed most of the recommendations for restaurants. We recognize that the majority of concerns stem from three key areas which are dorm style lodging, dining & meal accommodations and the ability to social distance or create personal space.

We have adjusted, and in many cases, eliminated our dorm lodging to offer alternatives to the traditional overnight summer camps and to address the lodging concerns. We have explored many new alternatives to our meal service and adjusted activities to allow for social distancing when possible.

Nothing at Country Lake is business as usual, including our standard practices and procedures. Most of the camps that were scheduled for the summer have cancelled – so we are taking this time to exercise our own creativity, partner with some local friends and ministry leaders to offer unprecedented opportunities for our community. For the past decade, summers have been exclusively reserved for camps and has allowed little flexibility since we were booked every day for 10 weeks, but 2020 has dealt us a different hand and we are excited to use this opportunity to announce a heavily modified schedule that focuses on four key groups. The Family, The Community, Our Local Youth & Retreats.

Focusing on Family Activities during this time is a natural and safe way to invest our time and energy. We have the ability to host 64 families at a time in private lodging quarters, with private facilities so we are shifting much of our energy this summer to providing a respite for families. We are also using this opportunity to extend an invitation to our community as we will be announcing designated days for families and individuals to come and enjoy the beauty of Country Lake along with the family friendly environment that it offers as well as some additional opportunities for overnight stays in private rooms or cabins. Participation will be fee based, but heavily discounted from normal summer pricing. We look forward to this being a bonding opportunity for our community and a rare chance for us to share the blessing of Country Lake with our friends, neighbors and families. We also want to offer a socially responsible environment for our students to gather at a time when many of those opportunities have been removed, but are still desperately needed. We will be announcing those dates soon. Due the circumstances, we also have rare opportunities to book summer retreats or private events utilizing the Main Lodge and Conference area as well as the 52 private rooms it has.

We certainly find ourselves in unusual times, but it is because of these unusual times that we get to offer some unusual opportunities. Opportunities that we have never explored or attempted before. Although it can be a bit overwhelming, we approach it with eager anticipation of what God can do with and through the ministry of Country Lake, the staff and the many ministry partners during this time.

Ross Knecht
Executive Director
Country Lake Christian Retreat