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MARANATHA MOMENTS

Official Newsletter of Maranatha

THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS!



Over 1,000 Celebrate the Joy and Hope of the Season at The Heart of Christmas!

The holiday season came alive at Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference on December 6-7, 2024, as over 1,000 residents gathered for the inaugural *Heart of Christmas* festival. This free, two-day event brought together families, friends, and neighbors for a celebration filled with holiday cheer and the hope found in the true meaning of Christmas.

Guests of all ages enjoyed an array of activities that captured the spirit of the season. From a charming story walk about the full story of Christmas, to joyful caroling, to creative crafts, and a bustling vendor market, there was something for everyone. Families savored seasonal food, warmed up with s'mores by the fire, and experienced great fun and fellowship.

This event was a collaboration between Maranatha and Unity Christian Events, highlighting the strength of unity in spreading the message of Christ's love. Working together, the organizations created a celebration that resonated strongly with the community. It included a special concert the day before the official event with Phillips, Craig, and Dean. Inspired by the overwhelming success, plans are already underway to expand The Heart of Christmas next year.

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THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS CONT.

"We are used to seeing so much joy and activity here during summer, but seeing it in December was wonderful," shared Chris Preuss, executive director of Maranatha. "This event reflects the hope and joy found in Christ's birth, and it was a blessing to see so many families come together to celebrate this beautiful truth."

Kevin Newton, executive director of Unity Christian Events, echoed these sentiments: "The Heart of Christmas reminds us of why we celebrate Christmas; it is an amazing and lasting expression of God's love for all of us. The gift of Jesus, God's Son, was the ultimate act of love. A free community celebration was a wonderful way to appreciate the original Christmas gift more fully!"

Making this event possible were more than 50 dedicated volunteers and the generous support of sponsors, including Pioneer Construction, Request Foods, and Lakeshore Employee Benefits. Their efforts and contributions helped bring to life a vision of faith, family, and community during this special season.

Stay tuned for updates on next year's Heart of Christmas festival— a celebration that promises to bring even more joy, unity, and hope to the Lakeshore community!





HIEFTJE FAMILY: Chris, Haleigh, Adelyn (Addie) and Hudson have been coming to Maranatha for 5 years! Their favorite ice cream flavors are Mint Chocolate Chip and Cookie Dough. They love to play Putt Putt golf or go to the pool as a family, and their favorite mission is Keys for Kids.

PRICHARD FAMILY: David has been coming to Maranatha for 28 years, his wife(Ally) for the last 16 and their children Isley and Cohen since birth.

Their favorite ice cream flavor is Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, although David is a big fan of Mint Chocolate Chip. They love playing in the pool! The mission groups they love are Moody Bible Institute and By the Hand.



DEKLEINE FAMILY: Colton and Anna have been coming to Maranatha their whole lives (28 years!). Anna's favorite ice cream flavor is Strawberry while Colton's is Deer Traxx. They love to go to the beach and enjoy Lake Michigan, and their favorite mission is Mission Eurasia.



CAMPAIGN GETS TO OVER \$12M



The Time to Rise Campaign Phase I is almost complete, with planning for Phase II already underway, said Gary Feenstra, who is leading the fundraising campaign.

“We are excited to see what God is doing here at Maranatha in the A Time to Rise Campaign!,” he explained. “The journey began with bold faith and big goals with a target of around \$20 million. We’re thrilled to share that we’ve already raised \$12.25 million!”

The Time to Rise campaign will ensure Maranatha goes on for many years until the Lord returns, Feenstra said. He added that the buildings are strategic for meeting our ministry purposes.

“We want every person who visits to grow and be spiritually renewed and accommodated with quality facilities and accommodations,” he said.

We are well into the second part of Phase One with the renovation of the Tabernacle. This goes beyond a simple renovation, it’s a careful preservation project with creative upgrades that honor its legacy. Stay tuned for construction updates from Chris and Corrine on Instagram, where we’ll share exciting progress reels.

Following the Tabernacle renovation, the new bookstore coffee shop will complete this phase, with a target completion date of mid-June.

Looking Ahead: Phase Two

Plans for Phase Two are already underway, including an expanded dining room, several new cottages along Channel Road, and a renovation of the pool house. These updates will replace aging facilities with thoughtfully designed, ministry-focused spaces. Designs for the cottages will be finalized by spring, ensuring they align with Maranatha’s mission and the needs of our visitors.

“This vision was prayerfully put together by the board,” shared Feenstra. “The timing of each phase has been strategic, and we’ve seen God’s hand of protection and provision throughout this process.”

As we step into the future, we invite you to join us on this extraordinary journey. Whether through prayer or financial support, you are a vital part of Maranatha’s Time to Rise. Visit our website to learn more, pledge your support, or buy a brick today. Together, we’re building more than a campus. We’re building a future rooted in faith and ministry!

TIME TO RISE BRICK CAMPAIGN



TABERNACLE RENOVATIONS



COFFEE SHOPPE & BOOKSTORE

Join the Journey: Brick Campaign

A highlight of this campaign is the Brick Fundraiser, offering a tangible way for you to leave your mark on Maranatha's future. With bricks forming the pathways and patio around the Tabernacle, your personal message can become part of this historic space. The bricks can have family names, Bible verses, quotes, legacy memorials, history, or other ideas.

- 4x8 bricks: \$250 (3 lines of text)
- 8x8 bricks: \$500 (6 lines of text)

To date, we've sold \$50,000 worth of bricks, but we need more support to meet our goal. These bricks make a meaningful Christmas gift and help build something lasting. To have your brick included in the first round of installations, place your order by spring.

You can order directly through the website or contact Gary Feenstra at (616) 836-5062 for assistance.

4X8

LINE 1
 LINE 2
 LINE 3

8X8

LINE 1
 LINE 2
 LINE 3
 LINE 4
 LINE 5
 LINE 6



SCAN for additional details

MARANATHA TRIVIA!

1. What is the "Official" Maranatha Green color name?
2. In what year did the Maranatha board expand from 6 to 20 members?
3. What is the official street address of the Maranatha Lodge?
4. In what year did Fellowship of Christian Athletics(FCA) partner with Maranatha for Sports Camps begin?

Sports Camps

Basketball Camp Recap

Maranatha's sports camps continue to serve as a valuable summer opportunity for local families, with over half of the participants coming from the surrounding community. This past year, the basketball camp welcomed between 80–100 athletes. The program was led by 5–6 dedicated coaches, with several Maranatha attendees assisting and playing an integral role in coaching and mentorship.

Each year, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) provides a central theme. This past year's theme, "24/7," was inspired by Romans 15:13: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." The camp's daily schedule reflected this theme through four key focus points, each building on the previous day's lessons. By the end of the week, campers gained a deeper understanding of the theme and its application to their lives and faith.

A typical camp day is thoughtfully structured, starting with drill stations to develop specific skills and followed by "Coaches' Corner," a time for water breaks as the coaches share faith-building messages. The second half of the session focused on games and competitions.

–Matt Diener, FCA Camp Director



BASKETBALL CAMP 2024



PICKLEBALL CAMP 2024

Pickleball Camp Recap

The pickleball camp proved to be a hit, selling out with 40 participants of all ages. Member Peter McCarty was thrilled about the opportunity to promote and grow this sport within the Maranatha community. "Pickleball is simple and straightforward," he shared enthusiastically. "But the real fun thing about pickleball is that it is multi-generational." The camp embodied this sentiment as multiple families, including grandparents, parents, and children, signed up to share the court together.

Campers practiced fundamentals under the guidance of skilled instructors and volunteers, including lead coach Larrin Flint, a respected player, instructor and devoted man of God, who led daily devotionals focused on themes of grace and freedom from legalism. Adding a unique touch to the camp was Jackie Freeman, an official Pickleball Ambassador and an author introduced to Maranatha at the Writers' Retreat this past February. She shared her newly released children's picture book, *Bend Your Knees*, Louise! Jackie led engaging devotionals for the kids, weaving together the principles of pickleball with biblical truths, inspiring them to grow in their skills, faith, and understanding of teamwork.

Looking ahead, excitement is already building for next summer, with plans to expand the program to two separate camps, one for youth and another for adults. Keep your eyes open for 2025 camp details and sign up early.

–Peter McCarty, Camp Director

Retreats Recap



RETREATS 2024

As our Retreats & Programming Coordinator, Lydia Young reflects on the retreat season at Maranatha with a heartfelt recap!

By Lydia Young

Over the last few years, the Retreat Season at Maranatha has become a robust sector of our Ministry offerings. By God's grace, we have served over 63 retreat groups since Labor Day Weekend- the most we have served in any Fall since we began hosting retreats. It has been an incredibly busy Fall for our staff, but we wouldn't have it any other way! Our goal for hosting retreats is that those who come through our doors get to experience spiritual and ministry renewal as they fellowship and rest from the day-to-day routine. We host a variety of retreats ranging from Women's groups to Ministry Boards, Youth Groups, to local organizations. Each retreat brings a unique group of people with a unique ministry goal for their time at Maranatha. With the busyness of this Fall we have been able to see thousands of people utilize our beautiful facilities and grounds- we praise God for the campus He has protected and blessed over these last 88 years.

Planning Retreats is what I like to call 'a giant puzzle.' Each group is different in their size, needs, and date ranges. To serve each group well we offer personalized package plans based off the number of nights stayed, the number of meals attended, and the number of meeting spaces needed.

The amazing part of this puzzle is that each group is served individually and specifically. We take their desires and needs and personalize their event accordingly. No retreat group is the same as the other- with this, there are things to be celebrated but also challenges to work through.

All our Hospitality teams, like Food Service, Housekeeping, and Guest Services, schedule their staff and order their materials based on the information we receive from the groups. This is so we can steward Maranatha's AND the Retreat Group's resources well. If anyone has ever planned an event, whether big or small, they know the ever-changing nature of the beast. Although it can be difficult to piece the puzzle together, when the plan ultimately comes together, there is something so rewarding and exciting about it!

One thing I love about working with the Retreats is seeing the differences between each group. In 1 Corinthians 12:18-27, Paul talks about how the Body of Christ has different parts. He shares about the importance of those individual parts, and how they bless one other and the greater Mission of Christ. I have been able to see this so clearly through the retreats that have come through Maranatha's doors, especially this fall.

Retreats Recap Cont.

We have a Retreat Group that comes every October whose purpose for the weekend is to care for and support Widows. We had a different group this fall host a weekend for coming alongside those who are in addiction recovery. We had multiple Christian Universities host retreats for the purpose of bolstering their students and equipping them as they pursue their education. We hosted ministry Board Retreats, where they spent their days strategically aligning their business models with the Word of God and His purposes for their organization. We host a conference each fall for Christian doctors and dentists who are trained to be lights for Christ in their respective fields.

I could continue to go on about the many amazing groups that retreat at Maranatha, each of these unique ministries and organizations play a critical role in the body of Christ. I know I can speak for both myself and the rest of the Maranatha Staff when I say that it truly is an honor to serve these brothers and sisters who are making an impact for the Kingdom. If I could offer any advice to a ministry or church thinking about hosting a retreat, it would be to simply go for it! Events are an unknown territory and can be super intimidating, especially for the first time, but I have seen God work mightily, even in the smallest retreat. It is a step of faith to commit to an event, but God is so faithful and loves to see His Children pursuing Him and His purposes. I have seen retreat groups of 10 people leave ignited for the work God has set before them, and I have seen retreat groups of 150 people leave refreshed and energized in the Spirit. I would encourage you to step out in faith and be intentional about taking time to pursue God and His will for your life and your organization.



RETREATS 2024

TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWERS:

1. Pantone 343
2. 1961
3. 4775 Lake Harbor Road
4. 2001

The Latest with Chris Preuss

Remembering What Matters...

Our 88th season is in the history books and it was another remarkable year of seeing God use and expand this ministry to His glory. With more than 10,000 people traversing our campus, staying ministry focused drove all the decisions we made this past year. "Providing spiritual renewal in a recreational setting, emphasizing Bible teaching and worldwide missions," is the reason we exist and God has blessed that focus with Maranatha having served up about 1000 more nights of accommodations over 2023 this past season. Most of these incremental nights came from our expanding retreat ministry. And giving to missions topped an amazing \$700K!

We accomplish all this as a non-profit organization that seeks to simply breakeven in its operations, with all gains being turned back to invest in the grounds and infrastructure. Importantly, giving supports almost a third of our budget, allowing Maranatha to keep its offerings attainable, while also providing a wonderful experience. Retreat guests will testify that Maranatha's grounds, recreations, accommodations, food, and meeting capabilities are top-level, but very much priced at or below other facilities with much more basic resources.

As I reflect on the year, the overwhelming thing I come back to is the ministry to the church we provide. Boldly preaching God's word, bringing people rest and restoration, and bringing the mission field to our guests and members is a privilege. However, it is entirely God's work and to His glory that we do what we do. Whether the numbers go up or down, we will remain faithful to the ministry we have been called.

It is also this ministry focus that is driving investments in our campus. A question I get from time to time is: "with all these new buildings, do we risk driving up Maranatha's costs so much that people who have attended for generations won't be able to afford it?" It's a very fair and good question that we can look at through parts of the campaign.

The addition of the South Africa building has filled a major hole in our campus for both our youth ministry and the retreat ministry. The building is getting full utilization in retreat season and has become a beehive of activity as the office center for the ministry. The building is generating significant returns for the ministry, which are more than covering the operational costs.

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The Latest with Chris Preuss Cont.

The Tabernacle and bookstore/coffee shop are strategic moves that will help expand Maranatha's appeal in both the summer and retreat seasons. All the money is donated and the revenue expected from events, sales, and rentals is expected to more than cover the operational costs without impacting guests and members. I should add, it was God's goodness, grace, and protection that the building held as long as it did. Having exposed the inner parts of the structure as we began the selective areas of demolition, it showed significant compromise, decay, and structural weakness. While there are a lot of memories and emotions tied to the original building, the renovation is essential to preparing for our next century of ministry, should the Lord tarry.

The new cottages and expansion of our dining facilities will add to our ability to serve more people and ministries over the next several years. The final piece of the puzzle will be the Channel Lodge, which will provide new flexibility for retreats and capacity for summer demand.

As we press forward, we do so with confidence that this ministry belongs to the Lord. The investments we are making are not driven by ambition, but by faith and obedience to continue the almost 90-year trajectory of this ministry. Each new building, each expanded facility, and every added bed represents greater capacity to see lives transformed by the Gospel.

The saints that went before us built Maranatha with this same faithfulness and trust. It is our prayer that what we do today will pave the way for generations to come. Through it all, we hold firm to the reality that this is God's work, and it is all to His glory. May we continue to serve with open hands and humble hearts, trusting that as long as He calls us to this mission, He will provide.

