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The year 2021 was year two of the pandemic and another challenging year for the ministry of Lutherdale. While still challenging, things are moving in the right direction.

Summer camp returned to week long programs. A lot has been learned about COVID-19 and we were prepared to run a safe and healthy camp program again in 2021. And we did. No COVID cases all summer. We had 441 summer campers, up from 200 the summer of 2020.

With the low numbers of summer campers and our partner camps that canceled, we had room to welcome another camp to our summer program. Camp CODA selected Lutherdale to run their 4-week program. CODA stands for Children of Deaf Adults. It was a great experience working with CODA and seeing the special bond they offer to children who have the responsibility of being the hearing family member.

The HOPE Conference Center started to welcome guests. We had a few church groups, families, and quilters enjoy the new facility. The WELCA of South Central Wisconsin held their conference here. The feedback that we kept hearing from guests was very positive. The HOPE Center exceeded their expectations. Word was starting to get out about the new facility. We gave many tours to potential groups, conferences, and weddings and have booked many of them for 2022. We anticipate an increase of over 150% in 2022.

The pandemic has had an impact on our youth programs. Youth participation in retreats is very low. Only a few churches were able to bring their youth to Lutherdale. There is so much uncertainty around COVID, youth, and vaccines. The trend of more adults coming to Lutherdale than youth continues.

When the HOPE Center was built, we had to hold off with paving the parking and road. We were able to complete that project in 2021 and what a difference it has made for all our guests to be able drive up to the front door of the HOPE Center. It has been a big improvement.

Work has started on the remodeling of the Watson Retreat Center to make it more accommodating for youth and large groups needing more space than one of our traditional cabins. When complete, the Watson Center is going to be an attractive housing option for many groups.

The Prairie Restoration Project has begun. The 4.5 acres on the south side of the entry road, was seeded in prairie during the month of November. This project will take about 5 years for the prairie to mature and will provide a habitat for birds, butterflies, insects, and small animals. Youth and adults will be able to walk and explore the prairie and learn about its unique ecological system. Part of the plan is to mow a walking labyrinth path into the field when it has grown to a proper height.

[We Do Ministry Together](#)

It has been my joy to serve as the Executive Director of Lutherdale for the last 25 years. This is my last Annual Report because I will be retiring at the end of the year. Getting to know so many people and hearing the stories of how Lutherdale has been an important part of their lives has been a great privilege. Visiting our member congregations and sharing the Lutherdale story showed me the wonderful partners we have in ministry and always with a focus that we do ministry together. That has been so evident with the tremendous support Lutherdale has received during these difficult times. The support from congregations and donors has made all the difference. With the addition of the HOPE Conference Center and the remodeling of the Watson Center, Lutherdale is expanding ministry opportunities and is ready to serve the church of today, tomorrow, and the future.

In Christ's service,

Jeff Bluhm, Executive Director