

Acts 17:16-28a

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace^[a] every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. ²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor^[b] he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God^[c] and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For 'In him we live and move and have our being';

"Created to Be Known"
Rev. Leanne B. Thompson
First Presbyterian Church of Willmar, MN
April 29, 2018

Entering from back dressed in camp attire with whistle, clipboard & backpack...

Hello, happy campers! Most of you know me as Pastor Leanne. But today I have got my camp on! I'm not sure how many of you know that besides being a pastor here, I am also the Co-Moderator of the Board of Directors at Clearwater Forest. And I am here today in *that* capacity to tell you about what a special place Clearwater Forest is, and why camp is important. Before we're done here today, I'd like to get you signed up to part of what is happening at Clearwater Forest where lives are changed in God's woods and waters!

Now, I can't take all of you to camp today, so I brought a little bit of camp with me (*setting down backpack*) so that we can celebrate the great things about camp:

Pine Tree &
Water Bottle

Clearwater Forest is a space to learn and grow.

I couldn't bring the lake and forest with me today, so I brought symbols of them. Located on over 1000 acres with 3.5 miles of shoreline, the breathtakingly beautiful Clearwater Forest is the perfect place to sing with a joyful heart, play with abandonment, worship under the stars and connect with the Holy. It is a place to find beauty, peace, renewal, joy, connection and spirit. It is a truly beautiful place where there is room to play and explore.

Paddle &
Beach Ball

Clearwater Forest is a space to try new things.

What would you like to try first? Stand Up Paddleboard, Kayak, Canoe, Sailing, Fishing? If you don't feel like going in the water, how about trying out one of the hiking trails, or the high ropes course? There just might be an epic game of 9-square going on (my personal favorite) or gaga ball. Or maybe you want to stretch your artistic abilities in the craft shed. Try something new - you may just discover a new

favorite hobby! Or discover that sometimes you just need to laugh and play. There is plenty of that at Clearwater Forest!

Loon Sounds: Clearwater Forest is a space to be still and listen.

Even with the noise and activity of joyful play going on, it is possible to find quiet places at Clearwater Forest. There are very few places in the world where we can truly unplug – Clearwater Forest is one of them! There is space to meditate, reflect, watch for wildlife and listen to the soothing sounds of nature.

Campfire Log: Clearwater Forest is a space to feel the warmth of God.


Former summer staff members have described Clearwater Forest as a “thin place” – one of those places where it feels like God is closer, and the noise and chaos of life are further away. One of the places I feel that most tangibly is around the campfire. When darkness falls, and the campfire is flickering, and campers are singing with their faces glowing, you just know the Holy Spirit is present.

Walking Stick: Clearwater Forest is a space to lean on one another.

Clearwater Forest isn't just a place to get away. It is a place to be equipped to go back into the world. Clearwater Forest takes seriously the responsibility it has to educate and prepare leaders for the future. At Clearwater Forest, campers are learning what it means to live in community, to share space, to treat everyone with kindness in respect, to take healthy risks, to use their voices and their creativity. Kids who get excited about God and about faith at camp, become kids, youth, and young adults who are active in their home congregations.

Bible: Clearwater Forest is a space to share our story.

Who doesn't love a good story around the campfire? There are certainly stories like that at camp. But one of the things



we do at camp is share God's story and help campers find their place in God's story, help them learn that they are beloved children of God, help them discover the ways their gifts and talents contribute to the story. And I guarantee, every camper, volunteer, and staff member leaves with stories to tell about the fun they've had, and the friends they've made, and the way they have grown from their time at camp. Because God is at camp, and in that sacred space, we begin to understand, on a deeper level what it means to live, and move, and have our being, in the one who created us and created the wonderful world we get to experience at camp.

Paul understood that God, who created the heavens and earth, is still making Godself known to us today through God's creation. Sometimes we need to look beyond our own grand creations, and our technology, and the idols we build for ourselves to know and be known by the one in whom we live and move and have our being.

That's what camp is about: unplugging long enough to remember who we are; listening long enough to discover who we are created to be; experiencing the joy of recreation and the encouragement of caring community; learning how to live as people of faith in the world. Clearwater Forest is committed to all of those things.

And you can be part of it:

- Register your kids (grandkids, nieces/nephews) – sign them up for camp! Our youngest campers are young kids who come with a grandparent to Grandparent/Grandchild Camp. First-Timers entering grades 3-6 can come for a short week if they are uncertain about going to camp. There are camps for elementary, middle school, and senior high youth! There is a whole schedule of camps – everything from our brand new “choose your own adventure” week to the more familiar sailing camp and classic week. There is even a Boundary Waters Adventure for middle school students. Jill & Scott Boeyink are going to be spending a week as volunteer Chaplains the week beginning July 22 – Classic Week.

- Make it possible for kids to go. Come downstairs after worship and join us for the box-lunch fundraiser! Your donation will provide scholarships for kids from our congregation to go to camp.
- Volunteer. There is an opportunity in May to join others from our congregation for a work camp, helping get the building and grounds ready for summer camp. There is something for every skill level! Talk to Marv Packer or Diann Anderson if you are interested.
- Take Advantage of What Clearwater has to Offer: Clearwater Forest is available to you for family reunions and retreats. There is campground available for you to pull in your camper or pitch a tent. If you want to get away to the north woods and want a convenient and economical place to stay, consider Clearwater Forest. And if you just want to get away for quiet time on your own, we have a wonderful private retreat for 1 called the hermitage. There really is something for everyone!
- Come See for Yourself: Join us on Saturday, July 14, 2018 for the annual Friends and Neighbors Day, our celebration of Clearwater Forest and the communities of supporters that make it great. On this day we open the doors to showcase our beautiful, historic buildings, our exciting programming and God's amazing wilderness. Come and experience the energy, beauty, joy and play that Clearwater Forest offers! We will begin the day with our annual Lake 2 Lake bike ride, raising dollars for our scholarship fund. Then throughout the day there'll be tours of the grounds and buildings, games and activities on the main lawn and community tables where you can learn more about our programs and partnerships. For the more adventurous you may try some of the many activities we offer on land and water including sailing, paddle boarding, our high ropes course and bouldering wall. A picnic lunch, a celebration program, and campfire singing will round out the day.
- Support Clearwater Forest: Clearwater Forest is a shared ministry of 4 Presbyteries (Minnesota Valleys, Twin Cities, Northern Waters and Northern Plains)...that means Clearwater Forest is your camp. You share in the ownership and responsibility for Clearwater Forest. Consider making a gift to support the ministry of Clearwater Forest. Undesignated gifts to our annual fund are always appreciated. But we are also preparing to embark on capital updates including renovation

and expansion of the Dining Hall, and retreat and cabin space to replace Osprey House, which was retired this winter. So if you would like to, you may designate a gift to the Building & Renovation Fund.

- Pray for Clearwater Forest: As we gear up for summer program, **pray for the year-round staff** who keep everything going! We are searching for a new Executive Director, so please pray for God to lead us to the right person - or to lead the right person to us - to assume that leadership roll. But pray also for the fabulous team that is already in place:

Cassie Gabe (Program Director),
Tammy Jacobs (Office Manager),
Lance Baumann (Facilities Manager),
Vicki King (Food Service Manager),
Jackie Owen (Housekeeping Coordinator).

They are fabulous, and their care and commitment to Clearwater Forest show. **Pray for the young adults who will be serving as summer staff** - serving as summer staff is a challenging and life-changing experience for the young adults who work there, so please pray for them. **Pray for the children and youth** who have been looking forward to going back to Clearwater Forest since last year, and for the ones who are about to try something new and go for the first time.

Well, its time for me to go, and get back to my normal life as your pastor. But you can bet that I'm looking forward to spending time at Clearwater Forest this summer. While I am enjoying the fun, the adventure, the joyful worship, and the quiet moments, I will be looking for what God is doing in my life and in the lives of all who get to know God at Clearwater Forest. I hope you will too!