

“December has arrived! Wait, it’s really December?!” (Now that it’s almost January...)

We have had conflicting thoughts about this month arriving as our camp “to do” list is still quite significant. Do you sense that same squeeze? This “Maintenance Season” at Barakel affords us time to work on projects as well as preparing for both the winter season and a broader look at the next year. November and December fill up fast 😊

For Jon and I, it means:

- Tuesday lunch for the five Seasonal Staff at our house
- Teachings for Wednesday's Staff Meetings from 2 Corinthians
- Thursday night Bible study in the Gospel According to Luke
- Inventory of the Trading Post
- Meetings to design the new online applications
- Meetings to implement “Immersive Bible Study” Weeks
- Setting the Trading Post up for Winter Retreats
- Working on the Trail design and signs
- Occupational and physical therapy in Alpena
- Weekly meeting with the Programers and preparing for Winter Retreats
- And Samuel’s basketball season began the end of November (Jon is coaching both the JV and V)

I am so thankful for the Word of God and how it refocuses my gaze to His glory. Many days this past year it has helped to relieve the stress, the unsureness, the wondering...to consider His goodness, His kindness, His majesty, His might, His justice, His, mercy His wisdom. To consider Him enthroned on truth and righteousness as our triune God.

Looking ahead to 2023:

- Winter Retreats are full with still many openings for AVS to serve alongside us in Snow Valley or the dining halls (check the website for updated needs - [www.campbarakel.org/staff/adult](http://www.campbarakel.org/staff/adult))
- many new speakers among a list of faithful teachers of God’s Word
- new online application portal for our HS, College and Adult volunteers
- a new walking path from West Side to both Snow Valley and East Side with the low-level lighting (looks very “Narnia-like” with the right snowfall 😊)
- Also, “new” staff are filling new roles as 3 of our RMS retired this fall.
  - Bruce and Kris Schedlbauer (10 years) felt called to serve their immediate family in their cherished roles of grandparents. Our newest staff, Caleb (Janae) Hall, will fill the registrar role for now and Rebekah Snyder returned after summer to continue as seasonal staff to fill the AVS Coordinator position.
  - Kathy Curtis (served here for 36 years in various roles, leaves a big hole in the Trading Post which a team of Jon and I along with Janae Hall will try to fill.



2022 came to a close for us “officially” with hosting our summer staffing events, the “Tech and Engineer Reunion” and “Summer Staff Bash” December 10 in Lansing. We delight to watch faces light up as they recognize their “new” friends, their counselors, their co-workers, and always a few awkward pauses as it’s been several months since they’ve seen each other in person...and then the bond they share in Jesus Christ pulls them in even tighter and time passes too quickly! Just over 120 of our summer volunteers gathered.

Each group has a time for playing, reminiscing – who can still quote summer memory verses?!, worshipping through singing and teaching from God’s Word, and eating! We crawled into bed after 10 hours of hosting, tired but encouraged by conversations revealing growth in their walk with Jesus and amazement as they recount how God changed their own hearts while serving last summer and excited about summer 2023 that is still 5 months away! Praise to the Lord for displaying His faithfulness to accomplish His purposes through His Word and Spirit as His people learn to walk in obedience to Him!



While much has happened in camp, the same is true for our own family this year.

- ❖ Isaiah finished his freshman year at Grace Christian College in Grand Rapids and chose to serve another summer at Barakel as a counselor. Look for his purple bucket hat if you look through camp photos 😊
- ❖ Jon and I rejoiced in February when Samuel passed his driver’s test (canceled due to weather and so older sister Katie and niece took him!) minimizing our chauffeur days! After taking the lifeguard class in June (taught now by his brother-in-law, Luke) Samuel spent most weeks at the waterfront enjoying the kids who came to swim.
- ❖ Hannah continues to work at Design One Spa and Salon in Grand Rapids; she enjoyed the fruits of her labors with fresh produce this summer and keeping her sourdough starter going by experimenting with a variety of tasty breads and pancakes, and recently has discovered making homemade marshmallows!
- ❖ Gretchen has chosen to move out of Hannah’s house and to Ann Arbor. We are saddened by her decision and pray that the Lord will soften her heart once again.
- ❖ Natalie remains in KY, enjoying its beauty and opportunities, as well as spending time with her boyfriend, Jonathan. She started a new job this month and looks forward to learning new skills.
- ❖ Andrea became “Mrs. Grunewald” during our last week of campers so our family converged in the Holly/Lake Orion area to celebrate her and Nick covenanting together in marriage. What a lovely day it was!
- ❖ Finally, Abigail Marie Benninger checked in October 4 after delaying a few days, weighing a surprising 9 lbs. and 8 oz. and shocking the midwives 😊 Eleanor and the rest of us adore her and are learning once again to “share” with one another!



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