

**HI CAMP !** I miss camp ! A show of hands, anyone else miss it ? Post camp depression is real.

Seriously though, who here has been to St. Crispin's at least once? How many of you went every year you could? Then how many of you were on staff, a dean, medical, or clergy staff ? Wow !

So some of you might be wondering why doing this service was so important to me, not just because I miss camp, but I think it's important to share with our congregation why this camp has had such an impact on so many people. I asked the question, "What does St. Crispin's mean to you?" I received an overwhelming response, and here are a few of them;

- Seeing God in both friends and nature
- It's a place where the weird kids can thrive and don't have to hold back who they are.

- The friendships there are so valuable because they they see you for who you are.
- EVERYTHING ... It taught me the importance of loving one another.
- It gave me the confidence to peak out loud.
- It's the place that gave me the gift of true friendship.
- Ultimately it means community, no one is judgmental.
- Made me the person I am today, without it I wouldn't be as kind and close to God.
- Many said that words cannot express the love that is camp.
- Unconditional love.
- Acceptance.
- A glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Having a forever family and home that will celebrate with you in times of joy, build you up and restore your faith in times of sadness.

- Encourage you to grow in faith and love for others.
- Being accepted for who you are and being able to connect with a community with no judgement or fear.
- We do not learn things at St. Crispin's to improve camp, we learn things at St. Crispin's to improve the world.
- Keeps us silly, keeps us somber.
- Community, friendship, and a place to experience the unconditional love from God and your neighbors day to day.
- Growing in faith while being surrounded by love, fellowship, and friends who are like family.
- Camp is part of my story and part of what I love about myself.
- St. Crispin's means love and acceptance for all.
- St. Crispin's will come into your life when you need it the most. A true breath of fresh air.

- It means thinking about God and having fun. It means making new friends and expressing out feelings.
- Having fun and laughing with friends and thinking about God.
- A thin place.

A parent even offered their perspective, for me, as their mom, it means a safe place for them to explore what it is to be God's child, to have his light shine through them, and to discover who they are in his care. It is a place my kids can play and be 100% themselves and experience nature and camp and life away from home. It is an important part of the journey of life. I think most every parent would agree with this statement.

I received so many answers to the question what St. Crispin's means to you and each one was genuine. Even

the former camper who said St. Crispin's was their first meaningful experience with bikinis.

I believe that a huge reason the community of St. Crispin's is so strong is the Rule of Life. This is the basis of this community and everyone strives to follow this rule.

- We are a community of daily worship and prayer.
- Out of our worship and communion with God we strive to respect the uniqueness of each individual.
- We do not put one another or ourselves down.
- Instead we are willing to level with one another in love honoring one another with honesty and respect.
- Therefore we are willing to give all we are to one another and with God's help to offer more.
- Whatever we do we do out of love for God, self, and one another. We are in life together.

- In everything we do, we seek to be open to the Holy Spirit.

These words are a life lesson for all of us. If we could apply these rules to our daily lives, I could only imagine what this world would be like.

Jennifer and I have been honored to have the opportunity to volunteer the last two summers at our childhood camp, St. Crispin's. We often say it is our favorite place on earth.

The first summer for us the theme was the Golden Thread. Each day we took a topic which was our thread. Things like prayer, unconditional love, fears, friendship, and showed how we all are in this together. How we pray together. We all have fears and struggles. We learned acts of kindness and what is unconditional love. How all of these threads were woven together in this community we are.

This summer our theme was First This, Then That. First be reconciled, we asked everyone to imagine a puzzle. We start off with all these pieces, not sure where it all goes, but trusting that God already sees out finished masterpiece.

We started with First This; Forgiveness, loving our enemies, reconciliation, Holy Spirit, Lord's Table. And we ended with Then That; peace, unconditional love, restored right spirit, renewed strength, and communion that bonds us together.

So at camp we all started out as these pieces but then we came together and left there with something larger, a community of love and acceptance, a family in Christ's love. That is who we all are. We have a bond. It is the love and community of St. Crispin's. I am so thankful it has given me the foundation it has and has allowed me to share it with everyone.

Knowing that St. Crispin's is teaching our children things like compassion, kindness, consideration, sympathy, and tolerance make it a valuable asset to their future. Teaching them to love God and love others. Showing them God's grace, compassion, and mercy. Not to mention friendship, acceptance, and love. I can tell you from someone who has now been on both sides, first a camper and now a dean. I could not be more proud of the ministry that is St. Crispin's Summer Camp. For those of you here today who have any question please feel free to ask any of us here who have been part of camp. We would love to share it with you, believe me we love to talk about camp.

Amen.