

Pilgrimage: a heavenly community here on earth



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"I don't want to go some place for three days when I don't know anyone there." This was my response when I was invited to Michigan Presbyterian Pilgrimage #4 (MPP) at Camp Henry in Newaygo. I was digging in my heels, but finally my husband and I did attend. Little did I know that this was the beginning of a wonderful relationship. Don't let the "Presbyterian" fool you. I myself am a Reformed Church in America member, and I along with other denominations (15 to be exact at last count) join together for a wonderful ecumenical time away with God, with a marvelous opportunity to deepen that spiritual relationship.

This is a weekend that enriches what is already inside a Christian. This is done through fellowship, music, food, talks by laypeople and clergy, food, prayer, food, fun activities ... and did I mention food? They put a cruise ship to shame. The fun activities are not what you would commonly conceive of when you think "camp." They are geared more for the less rigorous types, like me, yet very meaningful. There are times of thoughtfulness and times of laughter. Each part of the pilgrimage has a purpose for the "pilgrim." From their website, it is described as, *"A pilgrimage weekend is a full three-day (72 hour) spiritual renewal. It begins on Thursday evening and continues through Sunday afternoon. The weekend is filled with opportunity for conversation, singing, laughing, and fellowship with other Christians. Time is made available for small group discussions, worship, sharing communion, and personal reflection. The weekend is structured around a series of talks that seek to enhance and expand the Christian life."*

The talks, presented by laity and clergy, center on the theme of God's grace and how it works in our lives, the different ways we respond to it, and how we live under it. Pilgrimage is a time to look at your own life in light of God's will for you, a time to learn and reflect on your place in His "scheme of things." The weekend is designed to equip individual Christians to be more effective in their churches, their homes, their places of business, and their communities."

Some of the testimonies on their website include:

"I felt God's presence. I felt God's forgiveness and grace and realized that what I did yesterday is not nearly as important as what I am doing today."

"One life-changing thing I brought home from my Pilgrimage was a tangible sense of community, of belonging. For just as I love because God first loved me, and forgive because He has forgiven me – 'community' was given to me and now I have experienced what that means, I am able to extend it to others."

"I have been a Christian since I was eleven. But until I attended a Pilgrimage weekend, I didn't realize I was part of God's plan - me personally."

The cost of going on a pilgrimage is relatively low in relation to all that you receive. For the cost of \$150, you receive all of your meals, wonderful new cabin accommodations, a beautiful setting at the lake, and other special things that I can't report, but you'll love.

Come see why 86 other churches in Michigan have been involved with MPP over the years. It started in 2004, when George and Gayle Davidson attended a pilgrimage in North Carolina. Their hearts were touched and they received the call to bring pilgrimage to Michigan. The upcoming pilgrimage is on October 24-27, 2013, at Camp Henry. It begins on Thursday evening and ends Sunday afternoon. Another pilgrimage in Michigan will be offered earlier for those who reside closer to Detroit. This pilgrimage is scheduled October 10-13, 2013, and is called MPP #26 and will be located at the Howell Nature Center in Howell, Michigan. Each location offers two pilgrimages per year; one in the spring and one in the fall. Find out more at mppilgrimage.org.