

IMPACT REPORT • 2023

# Common Ground, Holy Dirt



NORTH GEORGIA  
CAMP & RETREAT MINISTRIES





*"It's a wonderful place for children to go to see God's love in action. It's helping change the world."— 2023 Camper Parent*

## Common Ground, Holy Dirt

Where can we find common ground? It seems in short supply and becoming more rare.

The concept assumes a distinction from ground that isn't common — ground that is held by some subset of humanity, some group fewer than all of us.

And it seems that, as we in our groups work to control and make safe the literal or figurative ground that we hold, we find it necessary to more narrowly define both our group and "the others".

In doing so, the ground we hold seems safer as the ground others hold seems less safe or even a threat to "us". The most unsafe ground of all? The ground in between two groups – once common ground but now the place all fear to tread: no one's ground.

*"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof..." Psalms 24:1a KJV*

For nearly 100 years, people from groups of all kinds of backgrounds and theologies have gathered on ground just north of Dahlenega known by the name Glisson and held by the United Methodist Church as common ground.

It is a place of safety and refuge and healing open not just to "our group" but to

everyone — a place where seeds of faith have been planted, have sprouted, and have produced fruitful lives for decades.

Declared by countless people as "a place where I belong" and "where you can wear plaids and stripes and be safe and accepted", **Glisson has come to be called "holy dirt" precisely because it has for so long practiced being common ground.**

98%

of campers felt  
accepted as part of  
their living group

*"The Earth is what we all have in common." — Wendell Berry*

Especially during this challenging season in our society and denomination, we are committed that Glisson, ELI, and Grow will continue to be safe, common ground open to everyone (see page 7), maintaining the values and practices that have created places of belonging for generations.

As so many places of common ground are disappearing, we renew our commitment to continue learning and growing our

abilities to welcome those for whom places of belonging have always been rare — to continue the challenging work of serving as a uniquely positioned sanctuary for unity and diversity amidst a culture that clamors for uniformity and division.

Where can we find common ground?

A chorus of campers 98 years-strong is calling out to us all:

Play out in Creation together until even the dirt feels holy. Practice loving God and neighbor together nonstop for a week or weekend. Follow in Christ's footsteps together so closely that everyone gets covered in the dust from His sandals.

After all, practicing the common ground of Christian community doesn't make the dirt holy – it makes disciples who depart to serve and transform the world.

For Christ and Church,



*C. Russell Davis*

C. Russell Davis  
Executive Director



*Bill Martin*

Rev. Bill Martin  
Chairperson

# Our Mission

North Georgia Camp and Retreat Ministries joins with the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to nurture leadership by creating experiences in Creation and in Christian community that encourage transformation, growth, and renewal for all people.

## Core Values

### Radical Acceptance

“Whoever you are...”

We accept one another for who we are — without exception.

### Unconditional Love

“Whatever you do...”

We love one another as fellow children of God — not as a condition of perceived merit.

### Christian Community

“You belong here...”

We serve one another by contributing our unique set of God-given strengths to the good of the group.

### Experiential Learning

“You can grow here...”

We challenge one another to put our faith to practice, then reflect upon our experiences.

### We Exist

to partner with churches and families in the pivotal work of faith formation



“ I learned so much about myself and God and **became close with people that make me better.**

— ELI Participant

### For the First Time or To a More Significant Degree...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>54%</b> learned more about the life and teachings of Jesus | <b>17%</b> shared faith with another person |
| <b>39%</b> spent time in prayer                               | <b>13%</b> led a group activity             |
| <b>23%</b> read from the Bible                                | <b>7%</b> accepted Christ                   |
| <b>20%</b> led a group in prayer                              |   |

(Percentage of 393 respondents to camper + parent surveys)

### We Offer

immersive experiences of practicing Christian faith and servant leadership in ways that translate to everyday life



### The Result

is transformed individuals who depart to serve and transform their church and world



“ My son and his cousin say Outpost is the most fun they have ever had. They were a little nervous about roughing it, but **they gained skills, confidence, and friendship through the experience. They also grew spiritually – what more can you ask for?**

— Glisson Parent



**ELI**

### Learn To Lead, Lead To Serve

Most people never dive deeply into who God created them to be and how God created them to lead. ELI is a multi-week, immersive leadership development experience custom-designed to be that deep dive.



**Outpost**

### Small Groups, Big Adventure

Safe opportunities for kids to explore God's creation are becoming less common. Outpost facilitates teamwork and learning new outdoor adventure skills in ways that help campers grow in faith, collaboration, and self-confidence.



**Grow Day Camps**

### Grow Spiritually, Socially, Individually

You can find a day camp for just about anything. What about one focused on forming faith and friendships? Grow brings the powerful experience of camp ministry to local churches and their surrounding communities.



**Sparrowwood**

### Where All Abilities Are Celebrated

Sparrowwood is a chance for campers with different developmental needs to be accepted for who they are and celebrated for all they offer. Focusing on abilities helps all involved see we are more alike than different.



**Group Retreats**

### Get Away & Grow Together

Time away together is rare. The chance for a group to be fully immersed in an experience is uniquely powerful. At Glisson, we specialize in hosting retreat experiences that facilitate transformation, growth, and renewal.



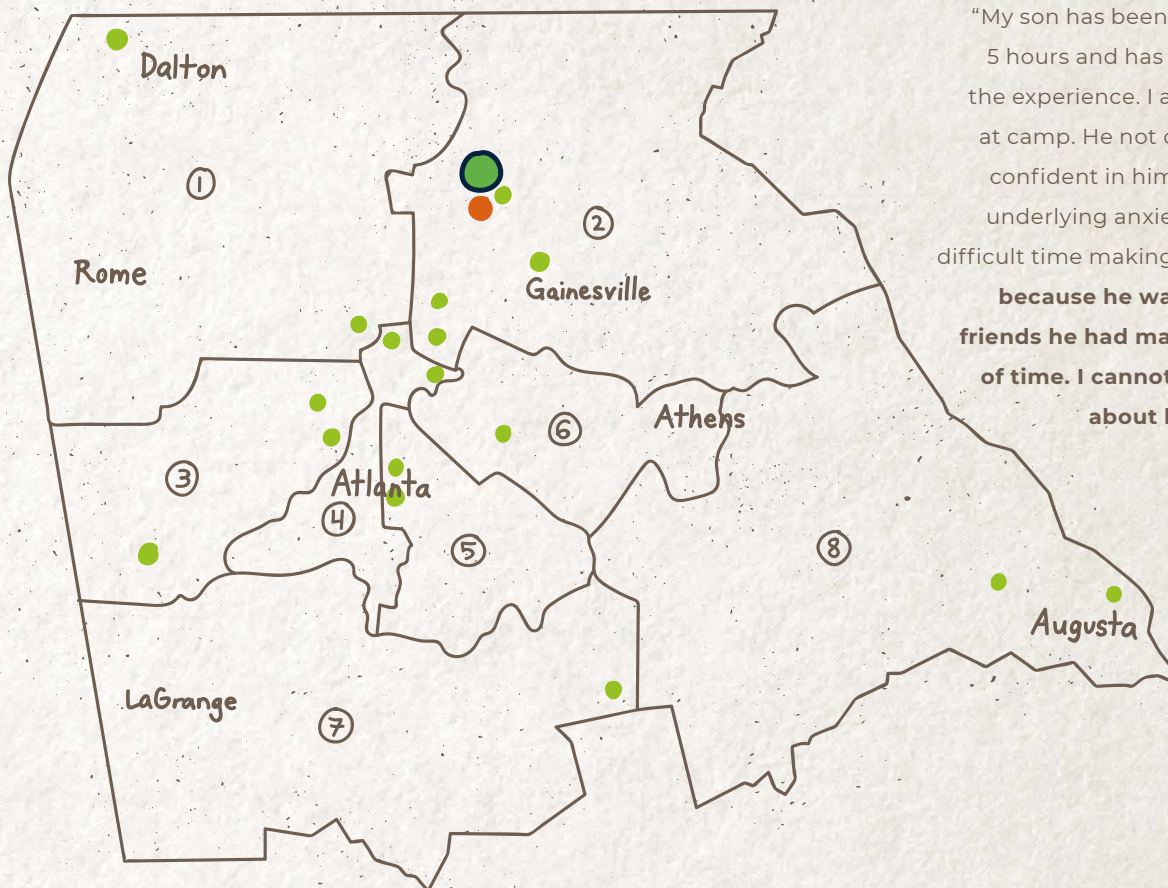
**Village**

### An Experiential Christian Community

To truly become something — an athlete, an artist, a mathematician — takes more than study; it takes practice. Village is an immersive experience of practicing Christian faith together in ways that translate to everyday life.

# 2023 Ministry Sites

**18 sites** serving 3,239 campers throughout the 8 districts of the North GA Conference UMC



"My son has been home from Mini Camp for 5 hours and has not stopped talking about the experience. I am blown away by his time at camp. He not only had fun, but seems so confident in himself. He is a kid with some underlying anxieties, and sometimes has a difficult time making friends. **He literally cried because he was so happy at all the new friends he had made in such a short period of time. I cannot say enough good things about his experience at Glisson.**

— 2023 Camper Parent

## Legend

- Glisson: Village, Outpost, Sparrowwood
- ELI Leader Week at Glisson
- Grow + ELI Sites at Local Churches

## Districts

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. North West    | 5. Central South |
| 2. North East    | 6. Central East  |
| 3. Central West  | 7. South West    |
| 4. Central North | 8. South East    |



## Practice Fields For Bringing Faith To Life

Studies show we retain only 5% of what we hear, but 75% of what we do and 90% of what we teach. Information is essential, but insufficient. Practice makes permanent. So where can we practice Christian faith and leadership? And with whom? And what does that practice even look like? Since 1925, our passion has been providing immersive experiences of practicing faith and servant leadership in ways that last because they translate to everyday life. After participating in building Christian community in the creek, on a campout, and atop the Alpine Tower, we're more likely to understand our faith as a way of being that impacts all parts of everyday life.



*"My two girls absolutely love it and look forward to every summer because of Glisson. At the closing ceremonies today, I couldn't help but cry tears of joy to see God's work. Thank you for all you do and have done for my children. — Glisson Parent"*

## NGCRM Annual Fund: 2022 Donors

Annual Fund donors help keep the price of camp lower, fund camperships, enhance programming, renovate facilities, and expand programs to reach new populations.

### Mountain Climbers — \$10,000 and up

A Generous Friend of Camp · Steve & Angie Collins · Dunwoody UMC  
Keller & Lynette Smith · Watkins Christian Foundation, Inc.

### Creek Hikers — \$5,000 to \$9,999

Elijah Moore Endowment · Eveland Family Foundation of Georgia  
Bucky & Lee Highsmith · Robert & Cindy Scott · Eric & Jennifer Wahlen

### The 1925 Society — \$1,925 to \$4,999

Brian & Kirby Darden · Russell & Rebecca Davis · Keri Grimsley  
Sydney Holcomb · Laura Lamb · Stephanie & Ian Lloyd · Lori & Paul Markley  
Bradley & Emily McEntyre · Phillip & Amy Nierodzik · Derek & Aimee Nobs  
Peachtree Road UMC · Susan Moore Posey · Elaine Sharp  
Matthew & Robin Street · Darrell & Anne Vaughan · Doug & Susan White  
Walt & Dee Ann Wilcox

### The Circle of 100 — \$1,200 to \$1,924

Scott & Janna Coker · Jim & Nancy Combs · Bonnie Deininger  
James & Beth Gwin · Russell & Stella Ivie · Mary Lanford  
Michael & Beth Lehmann · John & Nancy Morris  
David & Mary Lee Stubblefield · Stephen & Ellen Ward · Alexis Zabetakis

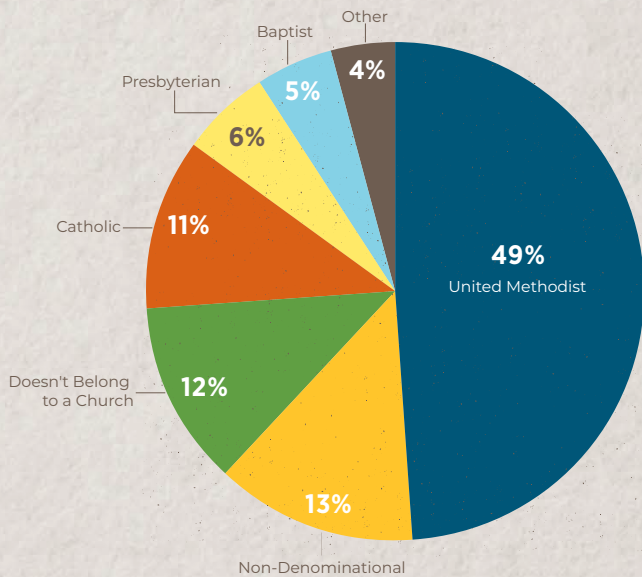
### Fire Builders — \$200 to \$1,199

James & Jessica Ammons · Amberly Aring · Lisa & Tommy Ayers · Belle Baker · Matthew & Emily Balte · Anthony Banks · Suzanne Barnett · Brooke Bernhardt  
Jennifer Bixler · Greg Bolen · Merrie Bouton · Katherine Boyce · Mikelle & Justin Brady · Chris & Heather Branscomb · Rodney Browning · Megan Bruening  
Peggy Caldwell · Vivian & Sherrie Cameron · James & Ann Carroll · Christina Cassidy · Richard & Susan Chewning · Drew & Katie Chrisohon · Melynn Cogbill  
Ronnie Cogburn · Valary Collier · Kathleen Copeland · Blake & Shana Corbin · Marci & Jonathan Davis · Linda & Jerry Dean · Shawn & Julia Dekold  
Todd Difiore · Diane & Brian Durham · Anne Elzemeyer · Stacie & Bill Franks · Stefanie & John Frey · Susan Foxworth · Mary Lynn & Trent Gaines  
Greg & Tammy Galloway · James Givens · Gibson Gray · Lara Kate Gregory · Laura & Dale Hackemeyer · Hamilton Mill UMC · Bryan Hardman · Tom Harrold  
Ashley Hass · Linda & Matt Herndon · Lee Ann & Jeff Holloway · Stacey & Jed Hunter · Amy Jackson · Brett Jackson · Lee Jarboe · Kate Jay  
Frank & Vicki Jenkins · Lynn Johnston · Kristin Turney Jones · Jenn Kerr · Adam & Clara Koontz · Mike & Nancy Lane · John Lawrence · Jessica & Jay LeCroy  
Geoff & Dana Light · Meredith & Jason Linscott · Michal Liske · Laura & Brent Lloyd · Melissa Mason · Michael McCord · Amanda McCullough  
Daniel McKeithen · Amy McMillen · Rebecca Meredith · Bill Miller · Jennifer & Chad Miller · David & Katherine Moore · Tony Murdock · Beth Myers  
Tiana & Jeff Mykkeltvedt · Madison & Joel Nierling · Oak Grove UMC United Women in Faith · Christi O'Neal · Tiffany Paris · Robin Parr · Laura Paul  
Susan & Tom Pavloff · Brian Peek · Emily & Tom Pfeifer · Mary Piercy · Tim & Susan Poolos · Robert & Camille Price · Jeff & Karen Pruett · John and Lisa Prunkl  
Ann Quandee · Deslie Quinby · Frances Ray · Anne Reich · Tracy Rhodes · Frances & Tom Rice · Tom & Pam Roberds · Leigh & Chris Rogers · Rome First UMC  
The Rotary Twilight 5K Committee · James & Ann Rushing · Gregory & Christina Scherrer · Ann Scheuerman · John & Lynne Scott · Kristen & Chris Seals  
Mike & Chris Selleck · John & Helen Simmons · Steve Sharp · Angie Smith · Ansley Smith · Megan & Hulett Smith · Jane Ellen Speers · Nickie Splude  
Brent & Myra Stamps · Christine & Chuck Standridge · Rene Stoll · Ann Story · Janine & Jason Tammermann · Daniel Taylor · Lisa Taylor · Tracy & Ryan Teel  
Katherine Thomas · Natalie Thomas · Laurin & Brandon Thompson · Doug & Debbie Thrasher · Allison & Jesse Turk · Camille & Michael Vaughan · Mary Webb  
Kenneth & Donn Ann Weber · Steven & Maria White · Joe & Cathy Wiegand · Tracie & Gary Wilson · Russ & Nancy Wise · James & Laura Zoll

Due to page constraints, we are unable to print the names of all 500-plus donors to the 2022 Annual Fund and the nearly 1,000 donors to the 2022 Campership Fund. For complete lists, visit: [glisson.org/donors](https://glisson.org/donors)

## Who Comes To Camp On Holy Dirt?

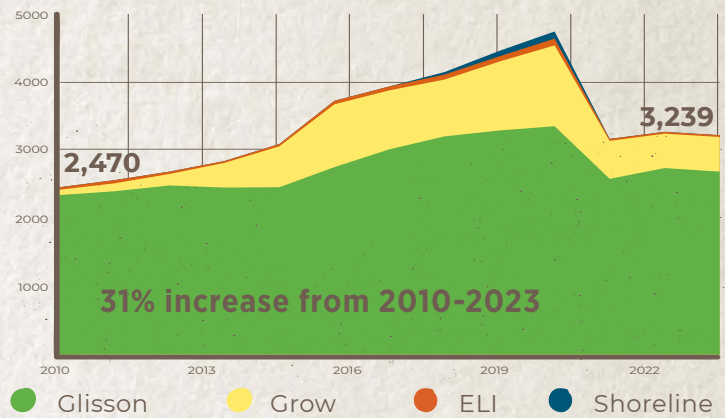
For decades, Glisson has been welcoming campers from a variety of denominational backgrounds. This chart shows denominational affiliation for Summer 2023 as self-reported for 1,971 campers. These data echo patterns of recent years, including: campers from 20-plus denominations; around 15% non-denominational; around 10% not having a church home; and around 50% United Methodist. We don't dilute our United Methodist identity in order to attract families from other churches. We use the unique context of a camp ministry experience to practice Christian faith together in small groups, while seeking to honor the beliefs and doctrines of families and churches to which each camper will go home.



“ It is a great experience for any kid, no matter the denomination/religion.

— 2023 Camper Parent

## 2023 Ministry Participation



96%

of campers  
felt loved at  
camp

**Glisson Retreats**  
Fall '22 - Spring '23

Guests: 7,326  
Nights: 12,480  
Meals: 21,942

88%

of campers  
grew closer to  
God at camp

## Financials for NGRM, Inc.

2022 Preliminary

Generated Income	\$2,923,669
Donations	\$825,357

Conference Apportionment Support	\$363,758
Annual Fund Giving	\$313,960
Capital/Campership Giving/Grants	\$147,639

Other Income	\$100,720
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Total Income	\$3,849,746
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Total Expense	\$3,338,383*
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\* Does not include 2022 capital expenditures totalling \$480,784

## Board of Directors

### Board Class of 2025

Rev. James Gwin  
Rev. Melissa Kime-Hall  
Rev. John Moeller, Jr.  
Kathryn Schroeder

### Board Class of 2026

Rev. Joya Abrams,  
Vice Chairperson  
Kristan Jones-Scales  
Mike Lane, Secretary  
Rev. Bill Martin, Chairperson

### Board Class of 2027

Tonya Murphy  
Tim Poolos, Treasurer  
Rev. Adam Roberts  
Amanda Seals

### Special Directors by Appointment

Rev. Doug Gilreath

## NGCRM Staff

Adam Buchanan,  
Facilities Assistant

Bryant Clay,  
Facilities Assistant

Blake Corbin,  
Director of Facilities

C. Russell Davis,  
Executive Director

Jonathan Emerson,  
Program Intern

Cameron Jones,  
Director of Communications &  
Program Advancement

Autumn Kuykendoll,  
Retreats Coordinator  
Grow & ELI Administrator

Laura Lamb,  
Executive Assistant

Audrey LeSage,  
Outpost & Sparrowwood  
Program Director

Ian Lloyd,  
Retreats Coordinator  
Development Specialist

Stephanie Gaines Lloyd,  
Director of Glisson Summer Camp

Rachel McGuire,  
Village Program Director

Garrett Queen,  
Facilities Assistant

Sarah Shelnutt,  
Summer Camp Registrar

Will Rhinehart,  
Business Manager

Will Roberts,  
Program Intern

Stephen Ward,  
Director of Glisson Retreats,  
Grow Day Camps, & ELI



“ The counselors seem to be having as much fun as the children, creating a **safe environment for relationship-building and experiencing God!**

— Grow Day Camps Parent

“ **My son loves Sparrowwood. He feels included** in all the activities. He talked about it for hours yesterday after he left camp.

— Glisson Parent



North Georgia Camp & Retreat Ministries

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Dahlonega, GA 30533  
706.864.6181

Check out our 2024 schedule at  
**[growsomewhere.org](https://growsomewhere.org)**