

CONGREGATION MANUAL



WITH OPEN ARMS
MAR-LU-RIDGE

Mar-Lu-Ridge
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With Open Arms – a campaign for Mar-Lu-Ridge

As we begin

Thank you for accepting a position of leadership within your congregation for Mar-Lu-Ridge's **With Open Arms** campaign. We appreciate your willingness to serve.

Within this handbook, you will find details and information needed to make this campaign a success within your worshipping community. Mar-Lu-Ridge is in partnership with GSB Consulting, a firm with many years of experience in this field. It is our hope that the bulletin inserts and other printed materials will provide the tools needed for you to feel supported and ready to lead. We are available to assist you, so please reach out with questions: Sarah Lefler sarah@mar-lu-ridge.org

A Plan for a Successful Campaign in Your Congregation

Special campaigns and fundraising projects are often intimidating for congregations and their leaders.

A helpful remedy is for the congregation to experience a success while considering the needs of partnering ministries. This manual outlines an opportunity that can invigorate your congregation. More than that, it is an opportunity for your congregation to partner with Mar-Lu-Ridge as we welcome all With Open Arms.

The plan outlined in this manual has worked for countless congregations over the last 45 years of GSB's experience.

The plan is straightforward. It requires a minimum amount of planning and work, and yields satisfying results that will benefit generations to come.

WHAT IS A CAMPAIGN?

A campaign is an organized, scheduled effort to communicate a need to people, and to provide an opportunity and a means by which they can respond. It is an educational process in which information is imparted to convey the message thoroughly, persuasively, and completely.

People give as they are informed, motivated, and asked to make a commitment. **The timeline that appears in the next section is important.** As you follow it, you will inform, motivate, and provide opportunity for the people of your congregation to make a commitment to Mar-Lu-Ridge. Only essentials have been included. Meetings, materials, and responsibilities have been kept to a minimum.

TWO PHASES OF THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign will be successful in your congregation when each phase of the effort is fully completed.

- 1) Weeks One through Three - the public awareness phase. During these weeks, we will educate members about the importance of the campaign and the need for their support.
- 2) Week Four - the responding phase. Beginning on Commitment Sunday, each member will be asked for their gift of support With Open Arms.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT

It has been demonstrated within the church that people are willing and able to support special causes when given the opportunity to do so. Be sure that everyone is presented with the opportunity to respond with a pledge or a one-time gift.

GOAL SETTING

As your congregation considers its response to the campaign, it will be important to set congregational goals for their efforts. These goals will not represent a firm commitment to the campaign, but it is hoped that they represent a serious, concerted effort to raise the amount needed for this campaign.

There are suggested "target" goal ranges for congregations to consider for the campaign. Target goals are non-binding goals toward which congregations can strive in order to successfully complete the campaign effort. Each congregation is encouraged to use the range as a guideline in setting its goal, choosing a level within the range or selecting a goal higher or lower than the range.

The range of suggested goals is based on a congregation's average attendance:
The range is \$150 to \$250 per average attendee over a three-year period.

Basic Goal	\$150 per attendee (or \$50 a year for 3 years)
Advance Goal	\$250 per attendee (or \$83 a year for 3 years)

ORGANIZING A CAMPAIGN MEETING

A committee of one to three (1-3) persons can easily conduct the campaign. They can plan the effort, gain approval for timetables and commitment opportunities, and recruit others to help to help with special tasks. Committee members should be creative people who know the congregation well, who may have an

appreciation for Mar-Lu-Ridge, and who are willing to organize and follow through on tasks.

Sample Agenda for the First Committee Meeting via Zoom

- Prayer for Mar-Lu-Ridge and for God's guidance, & Introductions
- Show the Campaign video
- Review the Campaign plan using the brochure
- Choose a timetable and goal (if not already done)
- Plan to seek approvals from council
- Assign tasks (see check list)
- Set next check-in time
- Close with prayer

CONGREGATIONAL CAMPAIGN SUGGESTED TIME-LINE & DETAILS

The suggested timeline for conducting the campaign in your congregation is any one – four week period in fall 2023 or 2024 that best suits your congregation. It takes time to communicate, to inform, and to motivate. Plan to use the option that best suits your congregation.

Step 1. Newsletter Prior to beginning the campaign. Announce the With Open Arms campaign via your congregation's electronic newsletter or group emails. Use Campaign letter #1.

Step 2. Week one

Sunday	Announce the campaign in person during worship. Use Bulletin Insert #1 Show the campaign video
Monday	Follow up email from the congregation thanking those in attendance and announcing next Sunday's MLR Story sharing.

Step 3. Week two

Sunday	MLR Story sharing by camper, retreat guest, friend of MLR during worship. Use Bulletin Insert #2
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Step 4. Week three

Sunday	Final MLR Story sharing by MLR Staff Use Bulletin Insert #3.
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Step 5. Week four

Sunday	Provide members with the materials to make or pledge a gift. Collect intent cards in an intentional manner during the worship service.
Monday	A campaign intent letter is sent to all members, thanking them for their time and offering the opportunity to participate if they have not already done so.

Check List of Things to Do

A committee of 1-3 members should be appointed.

ITEM	Committee Member Responsible
1. Decide on COMMITMENT OPPORTUNITY to be used. Get approval. Set dates.	_____
2. Arrange for use of Bulletin and Newsletter paragraphs.	_____
3. Arrange for use of first and second letters in newsletter and/or congregation e-mail/mailing.	_____
4. Arrange for use of three Bulletin Inserts (week #1, 2, 3)	_____
5. Arrange to show the video at all opportunities.	_____
6. Select and meet with MLR Story sharing presenters. Schedule with Pastor five minutes for presentation each of two Sundays.	_____
7. Arrange for Brochure distribution. (Week #2 and option to email)	_____
8. Arrange for the Commitment Sunday observance. Include presentation by MLR Staff	_____
9. Arrange to provide each member an opportunity to make a three-year intent. Also arrange for follow-up on those missed.	_____
10. Send report totals and completed Intent forms to the Mar-Lu-Ridge office.	_____

MATERIALS FOR THE *With Open Arms* CAMPAIGN

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>USE</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>
Three different Bulletin Inserts*	1 st , 2nd,3rd Sundays*	Number of average worship attendees
Video	At every opportunity during the Campaign	One overview video
Brochure*	3rd Sunday*	Number of average worship attendees
Intent Form	3 rd Sunday/email	Number of average worship attendees

Digital versions of all letters and materials will be sent to campaign leaders.

Note: You are welcome to include the bulletin inserts in your newsletter or other periodic mailings. You can also mail the brochure prior to Sunday with Letter #2.

Feel free to be flexible, but please do use the materials. If you need more materials, call the campaign office well in advance of the date you will require them. If you have extra materials you do not need, please return them to the campaign office for use by other congregations.

Contact Information:

**Mar-Lu-Ridge
3200 Mar-Lu-Ridge Road
Jefferson, MD 21755
Phone: (301) 874-5544
Email: sarah@mar-lu-ridge.org**

FILLERS FOR BULLETIN AND MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS

We encourage you to include brief bulletin and newsletter articles during the weeks of this campaign to highlight examples of how ministry at camp is impacting and changing lives. Here are several short fillers. Feel free to use impact stories from the website.

Mar-Lu-Ridge is a place of welcome. Every camper, guest, volunteer and staff member can find acceptance and inclusion in this space. As we serve our camp community and retreat guests, we want to offer fully accessible spaces so that everyone can participate with ease. By making our facilities accessible, we will live into our mission to welcome all people through sacred hospitality.

At Mar-Lu-Ridge, campers and families experience joy and acceptance. Having a place that is safe and inclusive is key to today's youth. We want Mar-Lu-Ridge to be a sanctuary for all – and in order to do that, we need to upgrade our Ridge Inn Conference Center and our Health Care cabin into spaces that are fully accessible. We don't want anyone to feel they are not welcome here. Mar-Lu-Ridge is a community full of unconditional love, committed to sharing that love and God's promise with all.

A camper guardian let us know that summer camp became a place of safety and joy for their camper, who had experienced a great deal of trauma in recent years. To know that the community of Mar-Lu-Ridge continues to impact the lives of campers and guests is humbling. We serve with joy. We work to include and to encourage. Joining together now to create fully accessible spaces for everyone is a commitment we are making, knowing that God is present and at work in this place.

MAR-LU-RIDGE STORY SHARING

It is important to use a variety of resources and materials so we can reach everyone in the congregation. Story sharing during worship is an important element. Therefore, please schedule two MLR Story Sharing times that highlight the ministry of MLR and speak to the importance of committing to the campaign.

Suggested outlines are provided below, but we encourage the presenters to share from their hearts. Telling their story of Mar-Lu-Ridge should be a joy, not cause anxiety. We will work to find folks who are comfortable presenting in this manner.

Each talk should be no more than **3 minutes** in length.

Story Sharing #1:

(This is an outline. Please feel free to add your own stories/experiences.) Ideally, this presenter is a camper or former guest or staff member.

- Mar-Lu-Ridge has been a place of sanctuary and hospitality since 1959.
- Tell folks how you relate to MLR: camper, former staff, Board member, volunteer. What draws you back to this ministry, to this place?
- Share your excitement to see MLR continue to grow and change so that all people can be served in an inclusive and loving manner.

Story Sharing #2:

MLR Staff will share the goals for With Open Arms and the multitude of ways these projects will increase our welcome, so that everyone can easily access and enjoy the sacred hospitality and sanctuary that is Mar-Lu-Ridge.

COMMITMENT SUNDAY: Week 1, 2, or 3.

We will joyfully come together to share the story of Mar-Lu-Ridge's **With Open Arms** at this gathering, and invite each member to participate as they feel comfortable. Intent forms and support materials will be offered.

1. Please promote good attendance by announcing and publicizing in every way you can that a special Sunday will be observed and urge everyone to be in church to participate.
2. Arrange with your pastor to speak to the ways Mar-Lu-Ridge support and encourages faith formation among youth and adults.
3. Arrange for distribution of the congregation brochure and the commitment forms in the Sunday service bulletin. If you prefer, email/mail it in advance with a letter (or with your regular newsletter) urging attendance at the Sunday service(s).
If you choose to use the brochure in both ways, you will need to request additional brochures from Mar-Lu-Ridge. Please do!
4. Have someone do a 3-minute "presentation/ask" (Story Sharing #2 by MLR staff)
5. Encourage the congregation members to participate as they are able. Pledges can be made over 1-3 years, or as a one-time gift. Please have intent forms collected to be returned to Mar-Lu-Ridge.
6. Gifts can be made in the following ways:
 - check written to Mar-Lu-Ridge
 - online through the Mar-Lu-Ridge portal
<https://www.mar-lu-ridge.org/support-mlr/>

CAMPAIGN SPEAKERS/VIDEO

The *With Open Arms* leadership team has a small number of volunteers and staff who are willing to present the campaign story at a Sunday morning worship service. They are ready to do a 10-minute worship presentation, answer questions about the campaign, and explain the exciting projects of the campaign. Contact Mar-Lu-Ridge (sarah@mar-lu-ridge.org; 301-874-5544) to schedule this. Be sure to do so well in advance of the Sunday that you prefer.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Use "Statement of Intent" forms in gaining commitments, whether in person, by phone/e-mail, or in groups. Be sure the form is legible, complete, and that any checks are attached firmly and properly indicated on the Intent form. Check name and address for accuracy.

PLEASE DO NOT deposit individual checks for the Campaign in the congregation account and then write one check for the total; all individual checks should be made out to Mar-Lu-Ridge. This makes it possible for Mar-Lu-Ridge to thank donors, include the gift in their tax receipt, or remind them when there is a balance to be paid.

- Send all checks directly to Mar-Lu-Ridge's office and proper credit will be given to the congregation.
- Checks will be processed and deposited immediately.
- Online donations will be through the Mar-Lu-Ridge portal so you do not need to track them. MLR will report them to the congregation.

The Statement of Intent is in triplicate.

- The donor keeps the white copy.
- The Congregation Campaign Leader mails the yellow copy to Mar-Lu-Ridge.
- The Congregation Campaign Leader keeps the pink copy.

Note: Mar-Lu-Ridge will handle all record keeping and follow-up for the Campaign including collection, reminders, and acknowledgements.. Your financial secretary or treasurer does not need to set up a system to handle intent forms, collections, or reminders.

ADVANCE, CHALLENGE, & MATCHING GIFTS

Advance, challenge, or matching gifts are very effective in gaining interest and encouraging giving. Perhaps you have a congregational member who wishes to offer \$5,000 as a matching gift. You can then encourage members to meet this match, thereby doubling your efforts. Another option is to set a challenge goal of \$5,000 and have all members work together to meet that goal.

One very effective method of setting the stage for the general congregation support is to collect "advance" gifts prior to commitment Sunday. These gifts can come from council members, pastor(s), and all Campaign committee members. By announcing the total of advance gifts received on the ***With Open Arms*** Sunday morning, other members of the congregation will be challenged to

respond generously themselves. Ideally, the advanced gifts will be announced week #2 (prior to Commitment Sunday).

Think about it and explore various possibilities. It is worth the effort, for experience has proven that advance, challenge, and matching gifts do work!

ALTERNATIVE OPTION: Design Your Own Option

If the above does not suit your circumstances, please be in touch about options or designing a plan or your own. The important thing is that your congregation participates in some tangible way so that everyone has the opportunity to give. The method is not as important as doing something and doing it enthusiastically, effectively, and well.

Regardless of the method chosen or developed, the single most important feature of the With Open Arms Campaign effort is to be sure that every family is asked to consider a three-year commitment.

Thank you for your time, we deeply appreciate you and your congregation.

Mar-Lu-Ridge
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First Congregational Letter – SAMPLE

(Remember—mailing costs may be covered if you apply for a Thrivent Action Team grant.)

Date

Dear Member of _____ Lutheran Church,

We are excited to share with you we have joined in partnership with Mar-Lu-Ridge, the outdoor ministry of the Delaware Maryland and Metro DC Synods. Mar-Lu-Ridge has been our camp and retreat center, open to all since 1959.

Congregations look to Mar-Lu-Ridge as a resource in providing a valuable ministry to our youth, families, and synods. They have helped raise up countless ordained and lay leaders throughout the past six decades.

In order for Mar-Lu-Ridge to fully live into its mission to Welcome All, there is a need to upgrade and modernize its facilities. The congregations of the DE MD and Metro DC Synods, including our congregation, will participate in a Capital Campaign to help raise \$2 million.

During the next three weeks, you will learn more about this important effort. We pray that your commitment to ministry will encourage you to become involved and excited about Mar-Lu-Ridge's **With Open Arms** Capital Campaign.

Yours in Christ,

(signed by Congregation Leader
and/or Pastor)

Second Congregational Letter – SAMPLE.

You may wish to copy the intent card onto the back of this letter—do not enclose the intent form.

Date

Dear Member of _____ Lutheran Church,

Mar-Lu-Ridge Mission: Rooted in Christ, we welcome all to encounter God's love through sacred hospitality, deepening relationships, and care for creation. Mar-Lu-Ridge is a place where all are accepted just as they are, beloved children of God.

As we complete the With Open Arms projects, the camp and retreat center will more fully welcome individuals with accessibility needs. They will truly live into the mission of welcoming all.

Funds are needed to complete the necessary projects over the next three years of the Campaign. That is why our congregation has accepted a goal of \$ _____ toward this effort and why we are asking every member to respond generously to help us reach the goal.

Soon, you will have an opportunity to join in this effort by making your commitment to Mar-Lu-Ridge's **With Open Arms** Campaign. We will seek your own pledge or gift through a Statement of Intent form that will be distributed at worship on __ (date) __. Thank you for considering how you will participate.

Yours in Christ,

(signed by Congregation Leader)

**Sample letter: CONNECTING WITH THOSE WHO HAVEN'T YET RETURNED
A COMMITMENT CARD**

Date

Dear Member of _____ Church Family,

On Sunday, # families participated in the *With Open Arms* campaign raising over \$_____ to help complete the funding needed to help make sure that our camp and retreat center at Mar-Lu-Ridge is strengthened to continue welcoming all. Gifts ranged from \$___ to \$___ and averaged \$_____ per family! Thank you to all who have already participated.

When we approved participating in this campaign, we hoped that all families at _____[church name]_____ would hear the story of campaign and make a commitment in some way.

We have certainly heard the story and know that our partnership with our outdoor ministry site is important to our members and for all people across the region.

If you haven't made your decision about how you'll support this campaign for Mar-Lu-Ridge, I hope you will join me in making a commitment that's meaningful for you.

Please join all the families who made commitments on Sunday so that our response to *With Open Arms Campaign* will reflect the best effort of our congregation. Together, we will increase accessibility and our welcome to all.

Please fill out the enclosed intent form and return it to the church in person or by email. We appreciate your attention to this matter by (date)

In peace,

(Name), Campaign Chair

Sample: THANK-YOU LETTER

Dear Members of _____ :

Thank you so much for your contribution to the ***With Open Arms*** campaign.

Your gift is an investment in our ability to welcome all to Mar-Lu-Ridge, so that everyone knows they are welcomed and included in this space.

To date, our congregation has committed \$_____ in gifts and intents to the campaign. We hope that more members will respond in the next few weeks.

You will be receiving acknowledgement of your ***With Open Arms*** gift from the Mar-Lu-Ridge office in the near future. You will also be sent periodic updates on the campaign progress and the ministry opportunities made possible through your generosity.

Thank you again for your partnership in this effort.

In peace,

(Congregation leader or pastor)

(Reminder: if the donor did not keep a copy of the intent form, enclose a copy with this letter.)