

Camping and Retreat Ministries Transition Task Force

In 2007, Bishop Michael Coyner called together several leaders in the Camping and retreat ministries of both the North Indiana and South Indiana Annual Conferences in order to begin work on a design for a new camping and retreat ministry for the new Indiana Conference. Our goals were as follows:

- Develop a design for a unified camping ministry in Indiana.
- Develop a design for a new Board structure and staff structure for the new ministry.
- Consider how to describe our ministry.
- Look for ways to collaborate in ministry between the Conference structures while these developments are taking place.

We have met together several times and those meetings have produced wonderful discussion. There are some basic items that we were able to agree upon quickly as beginning assertions:

- The Camping and Retreat ministry should be one well-coordinated ministry rather than a collection of individually directed sites.
- We believe that our ministry exists to serve the local church and to excite and enhance the ministries that they have in serving others. We are a tool that they can use to grow their ministries with an emphasis on youth.
- We believe that our ministries are intentionally Wesleyan/Methodist in nature and our programming continues to reflect that as we share Christ with others we serve.
- We have, between the two former ministries, facilities that are well located geographically that can aid the new ministry in providing fine discipleship experiences for “customers” throughout the State of Indiana. We feel that all of the eight sites currently located within our Area can be well utilized in doing so. We also note here that the status of the former South Conference camp at Santa Claus is not clear, but we believe that it could add to the overall effectiveness in ministry if it is able to be utilized by the new ministry.
- We believe that a new camping and retreat ministry can and should be built with the goal of being bigger and better than the “sum of its parts”. We note that “bigger” in terms of numbers of campers is not the only important factor in determining whether a ministry is “better”. Yet in keeping with the mission of the Indiana Annual Conference of “Making Disciples for Jesus Christ,” we believe that an effort to greatly expand this ministry numerically would be in order. We understand that most of the people who make a decision for Christ do so before or during their teen years. This makes the ministry we undertake among children and youth extremely important. Both former Conferences considered the camping programs to be their most effective ministries in making new disciples. Presumably, our new Conference will want to continue to develop this ministry into an outstanding ministry to reach new disciples and to promote continued spiritual growth. We desire to see the new Camping and Retreat Ministry be a ministry “OF” the Conference rather than “FOR” the Conference. As an outreach tool of every Indiana United Methodist congregation, we see our primary market as ALL of the youth of Indiana and surrounding areas, rather than just the youth who attend our churches.
- We also believe that we must pay attention to the expanding diversity in our state, and find ways to offer programs that are more relevant and attractive to young people from urban and ethnic cultures that are growing within the boundaries of Indiana. Some examples might be developing “urban” camps in a city setting to appeal to youth who simply do not relate to the “rustic” setting of our current sites, or camps that are conducted in Spanish or Korean languages.
- We also believe that the camping ministry exists to also help people of all ages and backgrounds to travel on their “spiritual journeys.”

Given these statements about the vision for the ministry, we believe that a strong, visionary Board of Directors would create the environment for these expectations to become reality. We propose a board of not more than 21 members from across the Indiana Annual Conference that would be made up not only of persons with a vision and passion for the camping and retreat ministries, but also persons who have experience and a record of success in governance, development and fiduciary oversight within the Church, non-profit or business sectors. The Board may decide that it could work more efficiently at a smaller size, or establish an Executive Committee that would be empowered to take action in areas to be designated by the entire Board.

The Board, through the Conference Nominating Committee, would bring nominees to each Annual Conference session that have vision and passion for the particular ministries that we undertake, which allows such vision to be self-perpetuating, but gives the Annual Conference the opportunity for oversight and direction.

We envision the following as the functions of the new Board of Directors:

The Board would bring nominees to each Annual Conference session who have vision and passion for the particular ministries that we undertake, which allows such vision to be self-perpetuating, but gives the Annual Conference the opportunity for oversight and direction.

- Provide guidance, direction and supervision to the Executive Director by:
 1. Participating in the creation of the job description;
 2. Setting performance goals;
 3. Conducting performance reviews with employment recommendations.
- Provide governance to the ministry in conjunction with CFA and Trustees.
- Ensure fiduciary integrity for the ministry by developing annual income and expense budgets as well as forecasting the long-term revenue needs.
- Establish a development process for current needs and for the long-term vision; Board members should be expected to be personally invested in this ministry as well as prospecting for and cultivating significant donors.

When such a ministry is operated as a division of the Annual Conference, there are many agencies that can impede the implementation of the ministry and program. This does not seem to be intentional; it is simply that other agencies that have some authority over parts of the program (e.g. Conference Trustees, CFA) have their own goals and issues that may not be the same as those of the Camping ministry. Both former Conferences have dealt with such issues over the years, but it has been more apparent in North Indiana, (the Camp Design Leadership Team highlighted this problem in its 2006 report at the NIC session) perhaps because the ministry there was the larger of the two. We see such issues as, again, unintentional, but inevitable as the new ministry grows in its outreach. Therefore, we recommend that the Board of Directors undertake immediate communication with CFA and Trustees in order to ensure common vision and purpose, and a healthy working relationship. These agencies may wish to establish cross-representation in the long term.

We recommend that a national search be undertaken to hire the best possible candidate for the Executive Director position. Further, the Executive Director, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, should establish the staff structure for the new ministry.

Important “connection points” between the Ministry and the Conference exist and can be used as ways to maintain and increase the connection between the two entities.

- The first is marketing the programs that the Ministry would operate. We do want to grow to serve more youth than our Conference serves, yet we still see the United Methodist Churches of Indiana as our most important market and the place where outreach begins.
- Volunteer recruitment would be done primarily - perhaps exclusively, especially in the beginning - from the congregations of our Conference.
- Retreat programs would be offered to our congregations first, and then beyond to other groups as available.
- We also see some potential for a staff position that would function as a 'liaison officer' to the congregations of the Annual Conference.

In summary, the Camping and Retreat Ministries Transition Task Force strongly believes that the ministry programs our new Indiana Annual Conference will be operating in the area of camping and retreat ministries can be a strong tool for growth in the ministry of the Conference. Our vision is to expand the ministry to reach new populations and diverse cultures of youth and adults in the state of Indiana and to offer them experiences that will transform their lives, lead to decisions for Christ, and offer growth in faith and discipleship. We believe that one united, focused ministry is a more effective means of operating than several smaller, localized ministries.

Respectfully Submitted Camping and Retreat Ministries Transition Task Force,
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