

FAQs for Camping Resolution - 2015

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NOTE: FAQs will be added as they are raised.

Acronyms used in this document:

- CCRM=Commission on Camping and Retreat Ministries
- IGRC=Illinois Great Rivers Conference
- SIC=Southern Illinois Conference
- CIC=Central Illinois Conference

CONTEXT

- 1. What has prompted the writing of this resolution?** Written and oral histories in the IGRC and former Central Illinois Conference (CIC) and Southern Illinois Conference (SIC), along with the present experience of the CCRM, tell of a several decades-long concern about the vitality and sustainability of the camping ministry and deferred decision-making.¹ Ongoing and earnest conversations and trying harder without other substantial changes have not, however, changed the landscape. In fact, the deferred decisions are becoming more and more problematic. It is also troubling that the \$4,000,000 the IGRC has contributed to camping over the last ten years has not only been unable to sustain the ministry, but has actually reached 37.2% fewer campers.
- 2. You say that a consultant facilitated the discernment process. Who is this consultant?** Kaleidoscope, Inc., is a camping industry consulting firm that has a long, strong history of strengthening camping ministries by leading them through a process of discerning paths to vitality and sustainability. With Kaleidoscope's guidance, information about the current reality in IGRC camping was gathered from statistics, town hall meetings at the sites, surveys, and hours of conversation with conference leaders and committees, and that data was contrasted with camping industry norms. Based on that information, the CCRM identified bold strategic initiatives that need annual conference approval. Their resolution will be published in pre-conference materials in early April. (Visit www.kaleidoscopeinc.com for more information).
- 3. I have heard that Kaleidoscope closes camps. Is this true?** No. Kaleidoscope *consults*; it facilitates informed decision-making. It has no power to do anything with IGRC property; or program, for that matter. Property decisions pertaining to real property (immovable) are made by the annual conference alone. Movable property decisions on campgrounds belong to the camping ministry.
- 4. What do CCRM members know about camping?** The present membership of the CCRM consists of clergy and laity who have a collective experience of decades and decades of work in the ministry as managers, directors/deans, chaplains, site support members, local church camping coordinators, and volunteers, and/or are parents of campers. All are passionate about camping and "their" camp.
- 5. Was my camp represented? Was there someone at the table to fight for my camp?** All camp sites were represented at the table by people who knew the camps well and could talk intelligently about their strengths, weaknesses, possibilities and obstacles. Discussion was lively. Before an agreement with Kaleidoscope was even approved, CCRM members made several covenants: 1) to listen to the consultant and take recommendations seriously, 2) to make passion for their own camp secondary (not an easy thing to do) to the dream of a thriving discipleship ministry in the setting of outdoor ministries, and 3) to go into the consultation with open minds (meaning all options were on the table). There was no "fight" except to position camping for a thriving future. The vote taken was unanimous.
- 6. Shouldn't this matter have been addressed at the time of the merger of the former Southern (SIC) and Central Illinois Conferences (CIC)?** It was a somewhat spontaneous, Spirit-moved decision to merge the two conferences back in 1997, and it was hoped and assumed the two former conferences would learn to live and work together toward the shared goal of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. That's what we are doing now. Blaming is a distraction from the work that needs to be done now. The CCRM invites everyone to move forward into an exciting future.
- 7. What's the exciting future?** The CCRM vision is for a vital and thriving camping and retreat ministry that partners with local churches to reach children, youth, and families in and beyond our local churches with a gospel that transforms individuals and the communities in which they live. There are several steps required to get there, the first two of which we have already taken:

¹ See appendix for excerpts of conference and CCRM minutes and other communications

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- An honest assessment of the health of the ministry with respect to facilities, program, and finances.
- Discernment of initiatives to leverage better health in all of those areas.
- Boldly pruning to free leadership's time and energy and conference resources for re-visioning and renewal.
- Tending thoughtfully and sensitively to the many particular decisions a major change of course requires, including, but not limited to, care of employees and residents and disposition of assets.
- Partnering in the meantime with the IGRC Board of Discipleship to create clear and compelling discipleship objectives and curriculum plan for campers that aligns with the mission of the UMC and IGRC.
- Implementing the plan for spiritual formation and a plan for marketing with clear benchmarks for growth and tools for measuring effectiveness.
- Being accountable to the annual conference for outcomes.

8. You have described a *process* in #7 above, but shouldn't we have a clearer vision for the future of the camping ministry before we make big property decisions? There are a couple of points we would make:

- The part of the vision that is most critical can occur at any camp—any location: making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Beyond that, the discernment of the CCRM has been to identify the camps with the most "tools" or potential tools for disciple-making, including buildings, amenities, and what one active pastor calls, "sanctified bait" (large body of water for swimming and boating, climbing walls, challenge courses, proximity to off-camp options like stables, etc.), which can be utilized immediately or developed at relatively low cost. The camping ministry has asked the Board of Discipleship to have a clearly articulated set of spiritual formation objectives for each age group and each remaining camp in time for marketing in the fall.
- Imagine an emergency room where medics have brought a person who has been found on the floor following a bad fall. There are several fractures, bruises, and wounds that have caused extensive bleeding. On top of that, the person has been on the floor for over 18 hours. The patient comes in with blood loss and dehydration. He is going into kidney failure and is vulnerable to pneumonia. The immediate concern of the ER is to stabilize the patient. The focus is on doing what is necessary to save the life. Once the patient is stable, equally important but less urgent matters concerning the patient's future can be considered. The camping ministry is in such a critical state. The patient has already been left unattended much too long and hovers on the edge of death. Failing to address the bleeding and dehydration immediately puts the patient's preferred future (life and quality of life) at risk. Without trauma care at this point, there won't be much to vision about.

9. What values and expectations drive the future of IGRC camping ministry?

- A clearly articulated and implemented plan for equipping local churches for ministry through camping and retreat ministries.
- A clearly articulated and implemented plan for spiritual formation.
- Modern, clean, versatile, accessible, and affordable cabins and lodges.
- Designs that make child safety less staff- and resource-intensive.
- Recreation options, including pools/lakes, adventure challenge activities, and dynamic program opportunities.
- Large group and small group areas, indoor and outdoor.

10. Haven't we done professional consultations before? Yes, the conference has called upon professional camping consultants several times in the last 40 years. Two of those were in the last *ten* years. The CCRM has also conducted its own studies, the most recent one in 2009 by a Viability Committee. Bold decisions are difficult to make because change almost always involves risk and loss. Also, the camping ministry was, until the last few years, minimally sustainable by borrowing from other conference ministries and camping reserves. Those reserves are shrinking at an alarming rate, and the CCRM believes it is unethical to take money that belongs to other ministries. It's also pointless to hire consultants and *not* follow through on the vision and strategies they helped us to articulate. The CCRM is deeply grateful to the IGRC Council on Finance and Administration for providing funds for yet another round.

11. *NEW* Are we the only conference having this problem? The IGRC is not the only conference or non-profit to struggle with the vitality and sustainability of its camps. It's a nationwide phenomenon that crosses denominational and non-profit lines, and remediation has frequently resulted in pruning and reallocation of resources. Contractions in the North Central Jurisdiction of the UMC have in many cases revitalized the camping ministries. Several others are still finding their way. Here's what's happening in other conferences:

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- Dakotas: Contracted from 6 to 3 over a period of years. They are still working at being sustainable.
- East Ohio: Sold 3 of six 6 camps in the late 1990's/early 2000's
- Indiana: A thriving camping ministry in six locations. We have some things to learn from them!
- Iowa: Sold 2 of 5 camps in 2007-08. Result is new energy and "in the black" EOY numbers. A Conference Design task force continues to explore more moves toward increased vitality.
- Michigan: In anticipation of a merger of West Michigan with Detroit Conference, the two conference camping ministries (with 4 + 5 sites) are merging ministries and will for the time being continue to support the 9 sites.
- Minnesota: Had five camps and in recent years sold two. A third was leased to other management and is now, after 4 additional years of non-sustainability, up for sale. Two sites remain and the conference has plans for a major make-over. They also lease some property near the Boundary Waters for the summer.
- Missouri: (not in NCJ) Relinquished *all* conference camp and retreat properties for new models of camping and retreat.
- West Ohio: Sold 3 of 6 camps between 2000 and 2005
- Wisconsin: Was advised in 1990 that with 4 sites (a 5th site had closed years before) they were still over-sited. Upon receiving the same counsel in 2000, they divested themselves of two.

12. What happened to put the camping ministries in such a crisis? A number of factors play a part in the struggle of many camps today, and most are beyond our control. The most significant causes are:

- a. Program and amenity preferences have changed since our camps were founded 40-70 years ago.
- b. Campgrounds have aged, and as aging facilities do, have a growing need for costly major maintenance and repair.
- c. The United Methodist Church (along with other mainline denominations) is shrinking and getting older and no longer feeding as many children and youth into our camps.
- d. Compliance with federal and state regulations around safety, accessibility, and personnel increases costs money.
- e. Young people are under immense pressure to use their time in alternative ways.
- f. We have not communicated our mission in a clear or compelling way.
- g. Fewer volunteers mean more paid staff.
- h. In the IGRC, the larger area created by the merger of CIC and SIC in 1997 likely upset the equilibrium of long-term loyalties to sites because of the itinerant migration of clergy to new territory and congregations with different loyalties.

13. What is the timeline for implementing the resolution?

- Fall 2015: Put retired properties on the market, develop clear objectives for the summer of 2016, discern and implement short-term and long term plans for marketing, engage a consultant to lead discernment of East Bay redesign, and begin survey of and conversation with constituents.
- Winter 2016: Begin assessments of Little Grassy potential and develop plans and timelines for action.
- Spring/Summer 2016: Bring a progress report back to annual conference and conduct summer programming at Beulah, East Bay, and Little Grassy
- Fall 2016: Conduct a thorough assessment of summer camps, begin update projects at East Bay, and discern next steps.

PRESENT USE AND SUSTAINABILITY

14. Why not just hang up our harps and cry—get out of the camping business altogether? It's amazing that God accomplishes so much, even when we are struggling. Camping has and continues to produce strong disciples and leaders for churches and the world today. Furthermore, retreats are Biblical and encounters with God and Christ are fostered in mysterious, awesome ways by fire, water, night sky, earth's heartbeat, new relationships, and Christian conversation. It is a great ministry that can be made a lot better.

15. Is transformation really possible? Yes, as noted in Question #11, many camp programs which have been redesigned and/or rebooted with new resources are doing well. There are also models of thriving camps in many places and in our own denominational circle. Camping and retreat ministries continue to be very effective tools for the spiritual formation of people of all ages and decisions for Christ.

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16. What does a sustainable camping ministry look like? There are at least three “must-haves”:

- Camp sites need 5,000-6,000 user days each year for a sustainable *basic* budget. (A user day is one night and three meals.) Only one of our sites has what is needed for sustainability—East Bay at 10,560 user days. Little Grassy had fewer than needed at 3,317, but has produced significant and consistent growth over the last 5 years. The remaining user days are split between Living Springs (1,475), Epworth (1,016), and Jensen Woods (704).
- The operating budget of sustainable camps relies about 80% on revenue from users/campers and 20% on other sources.
- A sustainable camp is also able to keep up with maintenance and market preferences.

History of Use – USER DAYS 2012-2014

Overnight Use (full & w/o meals)	Beulah	East Bay	Epworth	Jensen	Little Grassy	Living Springs
2012 user days	2,415	9,564	1,753	555	2,865	2,271
2013 user days	2,595	10,043	1,377	754	2,938	1,782
2014 user days	2,224	10,560	1,016	704	3,317	1,475

User day: 1 overnight and 3 meals = 1 user day
5,000-6,000 user days → sustainable *basic* operating budget

OR

800-1,000 camper weeks = 4,000-5,000 user days
• 100-125 campers average for 8-10 weeks of summer

Summer Camp Attendance - 2005-2014

	Beulah	East Bay	Epworth	Jensen	Little Grassy	Living Springs	TOTAL	% change
2005	654	803	362	529	219	426	2,330	
2006	587	737	376	405	219	363	2,000	-10.2%
2007	665	735	400	346	194	390	2,065	-1.7%
2008	606	513	336	259	185	403	1,696	-17.9%
2009	586	452	404	211			1,594	-6.0%
2010	527	423	413	181			1,491	-6.5%
2011	612	476	445	141	266	208	1,536	+3.0%
2012	601	639	434	133	379	178	1,763	+14.8%
2013	608	585	335	153	434	133	1,600	-7.0%
2014	539	496	266	166	443	97	1,468	-10.5%

-37.2%

Number of people at summer camps (IGRC sponsored) – not including volunteers
Beulah not included in total

(NOTES: Jensen Woods' User Days do not include hunters at Jensen Woods who use the camp exclusively from October 15 - December 31. This is because those numbers were not reported and because their use of the site for hunting is not considered missional. This contract ends September 30, 2015)

17. How many campers would we need each summer to make it work? Each site would need to run 8-10 weeks of camp each summer with 100-125 in attendance each week. Five camps in a pattern of loss would not be able to reach these numbers within the next ten years even at a reasonable growth rate of 3% annually.

18. Kids don't come because our camps cost too much. Can't we make them more affordable? 1) The registration fees of the IGRC are very much in line with what other camps are charging nationwide. 2) Local churches and the IGRC have scholarship funds that make it possible for any camper in need of support to attend. 3) Parents are willing to pay for expensive camps that promise to impact their children's future, e.g., the \$575-\$650 charged for a week at band camp in Illinois. A reduction in cost to campers and families may be possible as we position ourselves to be more economically sustainable.

19. How much is the camping operating budget? Where does it come from? Where does it go? The total budget for camping in 2015 is \$1,707,707.

- There are several revenue streams: 1) conference apportionments (\$525,000 minus about 10% because of unpaid apportionments), 2) Advance giving to camp program and improvement and scholarship project accounts, 3) and user fees.
- Of the total budget in 2015 user fees are expected to cover 39% of expenses. Vital and sustainable camps are typically supported 80% by user fees. In the IGRC a combined revenue of 80% from users would enable most apportioned and all Advance giving to fund major maintenance, upgrading, remodeling, capital improvements, expanding the program activities that attract campers, reducing rates, providing scholarships, and supporting innovative ministries of outreach.
- Expenses in 2015 include employee compensation (43%); utilities (11%); food service (9%); maintenance & janitorial (9%); program (9%); insurance (3%); equipment (3%), and miscellaneous (2%).

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20. REVISED How much is each camp over budget? The 2015 budget anticipates the following overruns for the operating budget. Keep in mind that making up the overrun does not address the major maintenance issues. These figures are for operations only.

	Budgeted	Overrun	%	Comments
East Bay	\$770,850	\$2,130	0.3%	Shoulders entire compensation for a staff member who also works for youth ministry
Epworth	\$82,225	\$11,430	14%	Overrun due to low use in off-season and declining summer season
Jensen Woods	\$127,100	\$28,744	23%	Overrun due to low use—on and off-season
Little Grassy	\$289,950	\$53,678	19%	Shoulders entire compensation for a staff member who also works for youth ministry
Living Springs	\$162,080	\$63,291	40%	Overrun due to low use—on and off season

21. How are apportionments for camping distributed? Until 2015 apportionments were distributed somewhat in proportion to the camp’s financial need. Beginning in 2015 we are transitioning to apportionments distributed according to user days. In 2015 20% of apportioned giving to camp and retreat ministries is set aside for special grants, which we expect to supplement the sites whose share of apportionments in the past has been out of proportion to use. The dream is to use the special grants for new and innovative programming.

22. Aren’t there missional reasons for supporting a site that needs more than user days justify? Absolutely! Mission programs must be funded, however. The IGRC camping ministry needs to get healthy with the core operation before it can support additional ministries that need to be sustained.

23. How many employees does the camping ministry have, and what impact will the decision have on them? The IGRC has 7 full-time, about 40 part-time employees, and an average of 22 seasonal employees. A large number of the part-time employees are on an as-needed basis (some very seldom), and seasonal employees turn over from year to year enough that we expect reduction to happen naturally by attrition. Core camp staff members have remained very ministry-focused through this process, which is a reflection of their faith and character. There are no crystal balls, but there is a commitment to walk closely with all employees through any changes that may occur in job description or hours.

24. NEW What happens to people living in residences on the camps? This question has been addressed. Retiring/relinquishing the land is not expected to create crises for families living on camp.

25. NEW What will happen to users who have contracts already? Only a very few contracts have been issued for August through the end of 2015. Persons who have requested use of the campgrounds after summer camps end have been advised that their event may be calendared, but contracts won’t be issued until after the vote in June. Contracts already signed will be honored, but no new commitments are being made at this time.

26. If we pass this resolution, what kind of savings will we see immediately? Based on the 2015 budget, stemming the current losses would free an additional \$183,260, minus whatever residual expenses remained for retired properties. This would go a long way toward beginning to address the operational budget shortfalls, major maintenance, and deferred maintenance. This alone will not address *all* the deferred maintenance and capital improvements, however.

	Revenue	Expenses	Difference
Epworth	\$ 42,715.00	\$ 82,225.00	\$ (39,510.00)
Jensen Woods	\$ 82,980.00	\$ 127,100.00	\$ (44,120.00)
Living Springs	\$ 62,450.00	\$ 162,080.00	\$ (99,630.00)
TOTALS	\$ 188,145.00	\$ 371,405.00	\$ (183,260.00)
NOTE: Revenue is based on streams other than apportionments			

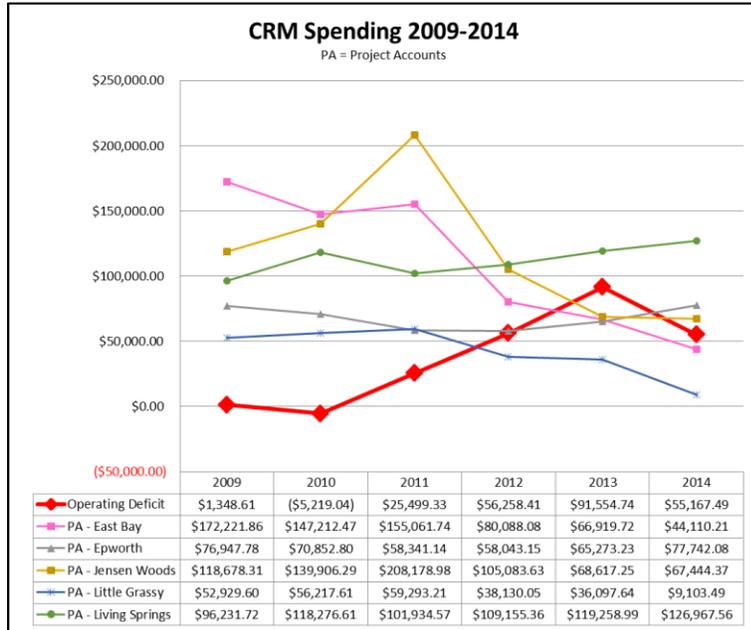
27. What about reserves? The graph below tells part of the story of our reserves (properly called “project accounts”). Numbers are a bit slippery because 1) *operational* expenses have not clearly been distinguished from *major maintenance expenses*, and financial overruns in basic operations have necessitated dipping into those funds at year end to balance the

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camping budget, and 2) the numbers in the end-of-year snapshot represented in the table below may vary according to when and for how much project accounts are tapped. In partnership with the Treasurer’s Office the camping ministry is developing policies and procedures to allow an “apples-to-apples” comparison from year to year. It has become clear in the meantime, however, that project accounts are paying more and more of what should be considered operational expenses.



Note:

- Three out of the four camps have considerably less in Project Accounts in 2014 than in 2009; one is about the same. Only Living Springs has increased, at least in part by anticipation of a new pool and bathroom and no major maintenance crises.
- Cost saving strategies paid off in 2014, but not enough to move camping out of the red and to address major maintenance and capital needs.

28. Is there other money? There are project accounts that are not site specific. These have been tapped to pay overrun in the past and are available for spending. It has not seemed missionally prudent, however, to take these reserves and spend them on operating expenses if it can be avoided, or to spend without a comprehensive plan for camping. There is also a generous scholarship fund. These funds alone fall considerably short of catching five camps up on major maintenance, capital improvements, and expansion of program.

29. REVISED What will happen with the reserves (project accounts) of the camps that are retired? No designated funds or real property is reassigned or reallocated without annual conference action. The CCRM expects the annual conference to rule that they be used for camping and retreat ministries. Advance Special project accounts for the camps that are proposed to retire will continue to accept donations until the annual conference casts its vote.

30. What steps are you taking right now to exercise good stewardship of revenue? The camping ministry has taken a number of steps to live within its means, including reduction of redundancy, shopping competitively, deploying staff more strategically, beginning to develop more stringent policies and procedures with respect to permissions, and asking the critical question, “Is this purchase furthering the mission of making disciples?” The CCRM, in partnership with the Conference Treasurer’s office, also has restructured the camping budget to improve transparency and accountability. The best efforts at good stewardship, however, are often undone by problems resulting from deferred maintenance. And there are many problems. And deferring maintenance is seldom good stewardship.

31. Can’t you get by with fewer paid seasonal staff persons? The ministry could get by with fewer paid staff persons if there were more volunteers who were willing, on top of giving a few days of their time to work with campers, to undergo some fairly extensive training that is required by Safe Sanctuaries standards and by the American Camp Association (ACA), which certifies the camps. Child safety is the highest priority, but our litigious culture also makes strict standards a necessity.

32. What impact do adult-child ratios have on budget? To assure child safety and be ACA-compliant, certain adult to child ratios must be met:

- 5 years & younger 1 staff for each 5 overnight campers and 1 staff for each 6 day campers
- 6–8 years 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day

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- 9–14 years 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
- 15–18 years 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day

In addition to these requirements, there must be at least two staff persons, one of whom is over the age of 18 and all of whom are at least 4-5 years older than the oldest camper, present with a group of children/youth at any given time. These sometimes do not include other needed camp “specialists” such as food managers, lifeguards, medics/nurses, wranglers, office managers, etc. (some of whom will do double-duty, but that’s not always possible). If camper registrations are low during a certain week, the camping ministry may have only two options, neither of which is desired: cancel the session or pay half a dozen or more staff to make camp happen for a group of 6-10 children. This problem has been addressed to some degree in 2015 by making the summer season at affected camps more compact, but in the big picture, staff-intensive models are not sustainable. New program models and cabins designed with today’s child safety standards in mind would help, but there is a need for capital funds to make this happen.

33. It’s always about money, isn’t it? Money is human labor and investment converted into a compact, versatile form. Offering of energy and investment in this compact, versatile form is as vital to a thriving ministry as individuals and groups who bring their tools and talents to paint and re-roof cabins. The vitality of the camping ministry rests heavily on the commitment of individuals and congregations to help in many ways: financially, physically, and with prayers. The bottom line, we have to live within the capacity we are given.

Solutions Explored

- 34. Can’t we give it more time and just try harder?** Giving it time and trying harder have been tried before. The appendix to this FAQ sheet documents some of the struggle over the years. At this point in 2015, to “try harder” is to say that those before us did not try hard enough, and that isn’t true. This is difficult stuff.
- 35. Can’t we just add another \$75,000 in apportionments to the annual budget?** The IGRC has for many years been a leader among conferences nationwide in apportioned giving to camping. By contributing \$525,000 annually, the IGRC is already providing stellar support (in a recent survey was the third from the top). Despite that generous giving, our camping ministry has run more than \$75,000 over budget for a number of years. An additional \$75,000 would help, but it would not *begin* to cover the costs of deferred maintenance and capital improvements, let alone the quality of ministry we desire. There’s much catching up to do.
- 36. Can’t we hire full-time site/program managers for all the sites and give it a few years?** To staff all camps adequately, at least three such employees would be needed, which could easily add another \$125,000-150,000 (or more) to the annual budget for a number of years. That does not solve the problem of deferred maintenance and need for capital improvements. Nor does it cover the cost of new program resources that today’s campers expect.
- 37. People don’t know about our camps. Can’t we do more in the way of marketing?** The short answer is, “yes,” but we need to market what campers want and need, and we currently don’t have everything they want and need. Campers (probably more so their parents) want well-maintained, attractive grounds. They want more modern sleeping arrangements. They want accessibility. They want climate control. They want convenience. They also want to know what their dollars are buying. These are vital components of marketing. Marketing our camps effectively will take more than “getting the word out.”
- 38. Why don’t we turn Epworth, Jensen Woods, and Living Springs over to local management teams—maybe let them spin off into 501.3.c non-profits?** This was discussed, and the following conclusion was reached: The CCRM needs sites that can be counted on to meet the standards and expectations of the ministry with respect to program resources, recreational options, amenities, and safety, and to be available when discipleship ministries of the conference need them. The decision to retire the three properties is largely because the properties need investments of \$1-2 million each (or more) to rise to those standards and expectations. The spin-offs would have to find that money, make those improvements, and present the various certifications needed before the CCRM would consider returning to them. Even with those conditions met, the CRM would not be obligated to use those sites for programming, and given the problem of too many beds already, would likely not. The camping ministry also is very much in need of funds that can be reallocated from sale of property.

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- 39. Then how about a Wesley Foundation model?** This was also discussed, but there is a significant difference between the operations of both. Unlike Wesley Foundations, camp sites are also businesses. Wesley Foundations don't have operational responsibility to provide multiple services and to manage calendars, clients, extensive property, and personnel.
- 40. Can't we market to non-United Methodists, other non-profits, and businesses?** The camps do have users whose mission is other than the IGRC's, but it is important that disciple-making, evangelism, and outreach be the primary drivers of our business decisions. Also, corporate and other for-profit businesses can only be utilized at a very low percentage of the total budget of camping. Not only is that income taxable, it could greatly jeopardize the tax-exempt status of the entire conference and of every church in the conference.
- 41. REVISED Can't we just hold onto the properties until some future time when we have the money to support programming?** Even in a state of rest, camps cost money. There must be at least part-time site management, which could run \$20,000 or more per camp. There continue to be utilities, insurance, and some maintenance costs. To idle the three properties could cost upwards of \$100,000 to \$125,000 each year they are idled. We would also likely have to pay property taxes during the idle period. In cases where site managers do not live on or within a few blocks of camp to monitor activity, liability issues become a serious concern.
- 42. Have you considered partnering with other camps?** Yes, the CCRM has explored some options for various types of partnerships, and this possibility is still on the table.
- 43. It surely wouldn't cost much to fix these places up. Couldn't a new coat of paint here, a new roof there, and a thorough cleaning do it?** Many of our buildings are beyond what paint, shingles, and scrubbing can fix, and they are far from meeting expectations of campers and camper parents, who are looking for amenities some sites don't have. Some barely meet safety codes and others actually present liabilities. With current codes and building regulations, commercial construction or renovation is very expensive. We are talking about millions (and millions) of dollars to upgrade all sites.
- 44. When I was a camper we got by without air-conditioning and other amenities. We didn't mind the bugs and critters and thought a mid-night trip to a latrine was an adventure. Why can't campers do this today?** The answer to this is really immaterial; for better or for worse society has changed and expectations are different today. Thriving camps have amenities, and if we want a camping ministry to reach young people, we need to adapt.
- 45. What happens if we don't do anything?** The challenges faced in the camping ministry are similar to those faced in local churches which struggle with buildings that are consuming more and more of the annual budget.
1. Major maintenance is postponed.
 2. Staff is reduced.
 3. Ministry is truncated.
 4. Survival becomes more important than mission.
 5. Deferred maintenance multiplies property problems.
 6. The property begins to look neglected because it is.
 7. Users are put off.
 8. Revenue suffers.
 9. Reserves are consumed.
 10. Ultimately, the site will close itself, with a handful of people who remain committed to the ministry doing the unpleasant work of cleaning up a crisis that could have been turned around or minimized by greater proactivity.
- 46. Where are we in the management of the challenge described in Question #43 above?** We are at #9.

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PROPERTY MATTERS

47. How much and what kind of property do we have?

	Acres Owned	Acres Leased	Description
Beulah	0	(User fee)	Holiness "village" on the outskirts of Eldorado; owned by Beulah Holiness Association
East Bay	89	45	Sprawling camp on Lake Bloomington, timbered with large open spaces
Epworth	14	0	Compact camp on a hillside on the outskirts of Louisville
Jensen Woods	549.5	0	Forested with fingers of open fields
Little Grassy	34	105 (S); 35 (N)	Forested with an open field on a 1,000 acre lake in Crab Orchard Refuge
Living Springs	160	0	Fielded, rolling down to wooded bottom land at Big Creek

48. **What is the value of these properties?** There have not been walk-on assessments in recent years, but Buy a Farm has provided a snapshot of possibilities based on farmland values for properties in the same area. These estimates do not include buildings on the land.

	Acres Owned	Estimate of Minimum per Acre	Estimate of Maximum per Acre	Total Minimum per Acre	Total Maximum per Acre
East Bay	89	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 267,000.00	\$ 373,800.00
Epworth	14	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 70,000.00
Jensen Woods	549.5	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 1,373,750.00	\$ 1,923,250.00
Little Grassy	34	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 85,000.00	\$ 119,000.00
Living Springs	160	\$ 2,700.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 432,000.00	\$ 560,000.00
TOTALS				\$ 2,199,750.00	\$ 3,046,050.00

49. **What will improvements cost?** This will largely depend on what the final discernment and designs are. If buildings are constructed by volunteers (appropriately licensed), it would be significantly less. The conference trustees are understandably hesitant to approve big projects that don't have some kind of legal accountability built in, however. Here's a snapshot of commercial quality construction, in today's codes and built by contracted labor. The checkmarks represent minimal needs (e.g., most camps could use new accommodations for 80):

Cost of Improvements by Contractors						
NOTE: The checkmarks indicate improvements that would be need to be addressed almost from the get-go. Also, all the camps have functional facilities which really need to be razed/rebuilt and/or undergo major (costly) remodeling. These projects are not included.						
	Approx. Cost	Epworth	East Bay	Jensen Woods	Little Grassy	Living Springs
Dining Hall for 150	\$ 1,500,000.00					
Cabin for 20 w toilet/sink	\$ 350,000.00					
Cabin for 40 w toilet/sink	\$ 850,000.00	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program Building	\$ 2,000,000.00			✓	✓	
Pool & Bathhouse	\$ 400,000.00					✓
Pavilion/Shelter for 150	\$ 200,000.00			✓		✓
Maintenance Shed	\$ 25,000.00				✓	
Deferred Maintenance	\$ 150,000.00	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

50. **Little Grassy Camp and East Bay are operated on leased land, aren't they?** Yes. Part of the Little Grassy property is owned by U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and East Bay's lake side property is owned by the City of Bloomington.

51. **What sense does it make to spend money building facilities that sit on leased land?** Building on leased land is more common than most people realize. Good lessees help the lessor protect their asset when their interest is not land development, but the body of water itself and/or control over the environment around it. All the homes on the shoreline of Lake Bloomington, some of which are multi-million dollar homes, lease their property from the City of Bloomington, which owns the lake for water supply. The same is true for Lake Springfield and Effingham's Lake Sara, among many others.

52. **Is it true that the lease agreement with Fish and Wildlife states that if we end the lease, we must return the property to its natural state?** Yes, but no buildings need to be demolished if the next lessee wants them. There has been some conversation with another ministry that has considerable interest in taking up the lease, and at this point, we are hopeful

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that ending the lease will not set the IGRC ministry back much at all. This other ministry has also indicated a willingness to offer reduced rates for use of the north side if there is spillover from our own site.

- 53. How long are the leases?** Little Grassy's Cooperative Agreement with U.S. Fish and Wildlife is renewed every five years. The current agreement will need to be renewed in 2016. Conversations with Fish and Wildlife representatives have already been held, and the CCRM has great assurance, based on those conversations, that it is highly unlikely that the agreement would not continue to be renewed. Bottom line for Fish and Wildlife: we (they say) are excellent tenants. East Bay's lease is a 55-year lease that ends in 2032. Conversations have begun with the City of Bloomington about extension of the lease. No major construction will be undertaken without getting assurance that the land will be ours to use long past 2032, and we can't get that assurance until we make a formal request for City Council to consider.
- 54. NEW Have the deeds to the properties we own been examined to ensure that we have good title to all the land we think we own and that there are no revisionary interests or liens that need to be addressed?** Based on title searches conducted in the past and on the knowledge we have at this time, there are no liens or reversion clauses that would present an encumbrance to sale. If any such difficulty should come to light that cannot be resolved without annual conference action, the issue will be brought to conference for vote.
- 55. I heard there is a reversion clause in the warranty deed that transferred the Jensen Woods property to the former Central Illinois Conference Board of Education in 1963?** No reversion clause is found in the deed. The deed expressly says, however, "Grantors expressly reserve unto themselves for their lifetime and the lifetime of their daughter, Roselyn K. Jensen, 50% of mineral and subsurface oil and/or gas rights." At the time of Roselyn's death in 2010, the IGRC became full owner not only of the land, but also of those mineral rights.
- 56. What about the recent remodeling of the lodge and construction of a commercial kitchen and chapel on the property at Jensen Woods?** This may be a case of getting the proverbial cart before the horse. The new construction is beautiful and functional, but there is no longer the quality of accommodations campers who would use it could stay in. Retrospect says it would have been better to do a full site mission and use study before launching into such a project.
- 57. The land on which part of the camp sits was donated to the conference. Wouldn't it would be a slap in the face to the donor to sell it?** Tracts of land on several of our camp properties were donated outright or virtually donated by individuals who passionately believed in camping as an effective means of making disciples. Other portions of properties were purchased using donations from generous individuals and local churches. We need to remember that *all* assets of the camping ministry have been donated. It is faithfulness to each donor—whether the donation is large or small—that moves the camping commission to put the donors' gifts to work in ways that keep their dream alive and maximize outcomes for the Kingdom of God.
- 58. NEW Are there pending claims (injuries, workers compensation, etc.) associated with any particular camp site?** We know of no pending claims.
- 59. NEW Are there any warranties on equipment that are still active?** Sites typically buy used equipment, so warranties are very limited if offered at all.
- 60. NEW Given that property tax exemption comes from ownership AND "use" by a religious entity, is there a plan to allow for any ongoing occasional use of the campgrounds after the summer of 2015 but prior to any sale?** Presently we plan to stop using the sites when they are up for sale and the last user contracts have been fulfilled. If we stop using the property in a tax-exempt way, it is our understanding that we will be liable for property taxes.
- 61. What assets and liabilities do East Bay and Little Grassy locations bring?**
- East Bay: Assets - proximity to a high population area, proximity to convergence of three interstates, lake-front for swimming and boating, indoor and outdoor pools and a gym, accommodations for multiple groups at one time,

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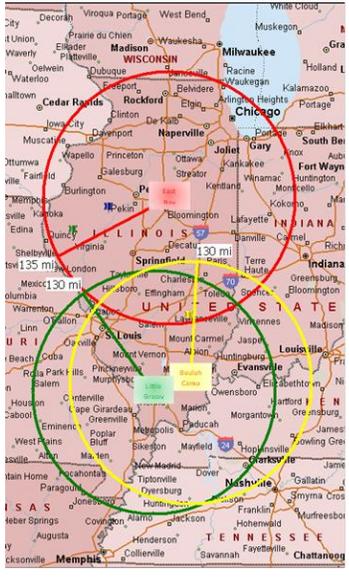
acreage available for growth, fishing, a challenge course, and soon, a climbing wall. Liabilities – old design, aging buildings and infrastructure, a 2-lane road down the middle of the camp.

- **Little Grassy:** Assets – proximity to interstate, accommodations for multiple groups at one time and possibility of continuing to use the north side, proximity to Giant City State Park and Giant City Stables, lake-front for swimming and boating, rappelling/rock climbing, hiking. Liabilities – aging buildings and infrastructure, limited room *on camp* for recreation, layers of permissions needed to increase the footprint of current structures.

62. What assets and liabilities do the other properties have? Epworth, Jensen Woods, and Living Springs all have some very nice lodge/recreation center type buildings and some RV sites. They are not as interstate-accessible, need considerable capital input, cannot easily handle multiple groups at the same time, and in the case of Epworth, simply don't have room for expansion. Among other things, Epworth needs to replace lodging and to repair the outdoor meeting space; Jensen needs all new lodging for campers and a covered outdoor worship area; and Living Springs needs new and redesigned lodging and a swimming pool/bathhouse.

63. Don't we need more than two locations? Studies show that people, as a rule, are willing to drive 2.5 hours to take their children to summer camp. Nearly all of Illinois is covered by the 2.5 hour radii of East Bay and Little Grassy. Of course, how far 2.5 hours will take you depends on proximity to interstate and condition of state highways and secondary roads.

64. The limited footprint at Little Grassy could thwart the development of the property, couldn't it? This is true and a concern to the CCRM. This is why the CCRM commits to further discernment on the type and location of property needed in the southern part of the state.



The map shows the state of Illinois with three overlapping circles representing 2.5-hour drive radii from different locations. A red circle (East Bay) is centered near Chicago, covering most of the northern and central parts of the state. A green circle (Little Grassy) is centered near Springfield, covering the central and southern parts. A yellow circle (Beulah Camp) is centered near St. Louis, covering the western and southern parts. The map also shows major highways and neighboring states.

East Bay to:
Kinderhook – 2.5 hours via I-55 & I-72
Moline – 2.0 hrs via I-39 & I-80
Danville – 1.5 hrs via I-74
Effingham – 2.0 hrs via I-74 & I-57
Chicago (downtown) – 2 hrs via I-55
Collinsville, IL – 2.5 hrs via I-55

Little Grassy to:
Arcola – 2.5 hrs via I-57
Casey – 2.5 hrs via I-57 & 70
Alton – 2.5 hrs via IL 127 & I-64
Litchfield – 2.5 hrs via IL 127 & I-55

Beulah Camp to:
Arcola – 2.5 hrs via SR 142 & I-64 & I-57
Godfrey – 2.5 hrs via SR 142 & I-64 & I-255

MATTERS OF THE HEART

65. This is where I professed Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. It is holy ground to me. Don't we want to maintain this ground so others can have the same experience I did? The decision to recommend the retirement of the three properties was not a light or painless one for members of the CCRM, and it is expected that others will feel the pain as or more acutely than those at the table who have lived with the facts and reflected on possible outcomes for over a year. The pain of others adds to the weight of the grief members of the CCRM also carry, but is one we are willing and able to bear if the death we die will lead to new life for a ministry we all love.

We affirm that our memories attach themselves to particular times and spaces, but also know that our experiences of Christian conversion, transformation, and assurance and the forging of relationships with others are more complex than where they occurred. Each site has produced countless passionate disciples of Jesus Christ and many strong, able leaders for The United Methodist Church and world, so no site can make an exclusive claim. God is everywhere. All ground is holy ground. Wherever there is love and community, grace and forgiveness, and peace and hope, the potential for conversion, transformation, and assurance is present. We want others to have an encounter with Christ at camp, but it will never be exactly like our own.

66. Isn't it true that we will probably lose campers if the three properties are retired? This is likely, at least for the short haul. Of course, we don't want to lose any campers for the short haul, but with the current rate of camper loss, the long haul looks considerably bleaker. The camping office will be working with site and program managers to reach out to campers who feel displaced.

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- 67. REVISED What is to become of the furnishings, equipment, appliances, and items of significance at the sites which are closing?** We can't answer this question in detail, but the CCRM commits to partner with site committees to assure a conscientious and tender stewardship and reallocation of resources and items symbolic of the heart and soul of the site and the people who built, used, and loved it to our remaining properties to strengthen the ministry and function at those sites. Lists of equipment will be made and managers of the remaining camps will have an opportunity to express interest in items they need. Otherwise the equipment can be consigned to an auction and disposed of.
- 68. Will there be an opportunity to remember and celebrate the ministry of the camp before it is sold?** The CCRM will partner with site committees to plan occasions for worshipful closure.

OTHER

- 69. You haven't mentioned Beulah Camp. Why?** Beulah Camp is not owned by the IGRC, but the IGRC pays a user fee to hold summer camp programs on that property. The IGRC summer program at Beulah is very strong and will continue without interruption.
- 70. Why would we have two camps in the south?** First of all, the CCRM believes that the IGRC needs IGRC-owned property in the south. Secondly, Beulah and Little Grassy are very different in terms of tradition and model. Beulah has continued to embrace an institute and holiness model that has a loyal constituency that spans several generations. Because of the history and nature of the program, the recreational limitations are not a constraint. In addition to Christian formation, Little Grassy offers a number of recreation options (swimming, boating, rock-climbing, horseback riding; and others—like zip lines and challenge courses—can be developed) and has a higher rate of "turn over" in campers, which makes it a bit easier for single campers to assimilate. Both camps are very effective, but also very different. The Little Grassy site will continue to be assessed and other southern options explored.
- 71. Has the IGRC considered renting other sites around the conference for providing Christian camping and retreat experiences for the children, youth, and families of our conference, similar to what we do with Beulah?** Yes, we have, and we will continue to do so. We are committed to conducting most camping and retreat ministries on conference-owned properties that we can design, maintain, and modify ourselves to meet our current and evolving outdoor ministry needs.

APPENDIX - Documentation of Deferred Decision-Making

1. From the minutes of Central Illinois Annual Conference – 1978: "In 1977 the annual conference mandated that the Central Illinois Conference Board of Discipleship conduct a study of conference camping, develop a long-range plan, and bring recommendations to the 1978 annual conference. Additionally, a special session of annual conference that same year ruled that camp land which was not absolutely essential to the camping program of the CIC be sold to reduce the conference's camp indebtedness, "thereby establishing Epworth Springs and East Bay Camp as the camping centers for the conference." Faithfully, the Board of Discipleship conducted the study (under the leadership of Dr. Melvin Moody, "our highest denominational executive in camping") and brought the following report to the 1978 annual conference: "...the Committee on Camping believes that the choices facing the Annual Conference are difficult ones. By programmatic criteria, the land at Jensen Woods is that which should be sold to further reduce the camping debt. That judgment, however, is a most 'reluctant judgment'. Jensen Woods does not have high programmatic value at this time, but it is a valuable natural resource." They further reported, "There are significant factors which argue against selling Jensen Woods Camp. Though most of that land was purchased by the Conference, the coordination of that purchase was largely arranged by Ernest Jensen. The Jensen family gave around 80 acres to the Conference and sold 351 acres at a favorable price. There is a memorial nature to that camp site, and the family opposes the land's sale. The land is a rich natural resource and may have greater programmatic value at a future time if the energy situation in our country worsens and trip camping declines in popularity... By keeping the land, the Conference would retain programmatic options and preserve the memorial nature of that site. The land could always be sold by future

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action of the Annual Conference, and probably at a significant increase in value." The report concluded with the recommendation that the site be further developed, "including a small lake, cabins, and central cooking facilities, on the basis of designated giving from local churches..."

2. Excerpt from the minutes of September 9, 1999 IGRC Commission on Camping:

Discussion of decreases at sites: Competition, cost, types of camps, dates of camp (e.g., Fourth of July), the numbers change yearly due to a number of factors. ██████████ suggested targeting and stronger promotion as opposed to a sit back approach, important to keep interest levels up.

3. Excerpt from the minutes of April 4, 2002 IGRC Commission on Camping on the need for a consultant:

Strategic Planning --

Work on a short range plan for the next 3 to 5 years to use that as a way of operating in a stable and responsible way in the IGRAC.

The particular areas to examine marketing financing staffing governance structure not for long run but for right now.

The person they have talked to would come to all of the sites and look for the strengths and weaknesses of each site and then an overall plan for what each site would be. It would be done for about \$10,000.00.

The committee begin to work with a couple of consultants to develop a plan for visits. Seek off budget funding from the CF&A.

Present this to the whole commission by the next meeting of the whole commission.

4. Excerpt from a proposal for a consultant's services with respect to a *Strategic Plan for Ministry*, dated October 25, 2002:

██████████ shared with the consultant basic materials about the ministry through which he gained these understandings:

- The Conference owns and operates five sites – East Bay (the largest and most stable), Living Springs, Jensen Woods, Little Grassy, and Epworth Youth Camp. A Holiness Association camp is also rented for at least one major event each year.
- These sites represent the facilities that served two annual conferences – Central Illinois and Southern Illinois – before they merged into the present Great Rivers Conference.
- The sites offer fairly diverse natural settings and are located in different regions of the Conference.
- The level of facilities and their condition vary significantly from site to site.
- The differences in program style, business practices and governing structures as a result of the merger are still in the process of sorting out.
- The Annual Conference provides significant financial support through subsidy for the entire camp and retreat program. In the last few years, that level of support has risen steadily. Subsidy for operational losses has risen so alarmingly that the Conference Committee on Finance and Administration has directed the Conference Camping Commission to "stop spending money".

As leaders address both the current operational issues and the future needs to create a vital and viable ministry, they wish to have assistance assessing all aspects of the sites, programs and operations with recommendations for strategic actions that will establish a solid plan for growth. 1

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5. Excerpt from the minutes of the November 11, 2002 CCRM meeting:

██████████ This is a scary time. At what point do we have to start trimming the trees to bear the best fruit. We need to do what the best thing is to prune the tree.

6. Excerpt from the minutes of the April 4, 2004 CCRM meeting:

██████████ is it marketing, the network, the right/wrong programs, what is it? What are we going to do?
As a commission we have a responsibility to grow or we need to look at something else. If not should the money be spent in a better place.
What is the issue that keeps our trend going downward. Much discussion was held around this issue with no definite answers given but an understanding that we need to look into this.

7. Excerpt from the minutes of the October 4, 2004 CCRM meeting

Devotion – We have to die to things in order to live. We are at a crossroads in camping. We are a microcosm of the Conference. We have several financial struggles as the conference. Question for group discussion. What do we need to die to? What do we need to give up and what do we need to hang on to?

Response from small groups
Die to me-ism, territorialism, bringing the Bishop, Cabinet, and CMT. We have to realize that we do have the power to change things.

8. Excerpt from a communication to the CCRM date February 15, 2007:

...the next step is to form a task force to look at the master plan. Some of the steps that I believe will be necessary include: site visits, talking to site managers, campers and parents. Once we have an opportunity to consider the needs that are shared and then look at the master plan it would be the responsibility of the task force to recommend to the CCRM priorities. Many more steps will need to follow... Some of you may feel that this has already been done and why are we doing this again as this was part of what Run River did to determine the outcomes for the master plan? You are right. But if we are going to ask churches and individuals to donate to facility improvements I believe that it is vital we review and be sure that something has not changed in the area that would say that the recommendations are no longer valid.

9. Excerpts from minutes of the November 11, 2007 CCRM meeting:

YAR will not be held at camp sites next year. So future YAR will be held at other denominations that are taking better care of their camp sites.

Master Plan Discussion

1. We need information gathering
2. Compare to Master Plan
3. Prioritize plans
4. We need to make a commitment to camping

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10. Excerpt from the minutes of the April 4, 2008 CCRM meeting

Campsite visit report: [REDACTED] reported in [REDACTED] absence. Photographer was [REDACTED]. Campers desire either the very nice or totally rough camping. We found that because of deferred maintenance there are many projects that need attention prior to moving into the dreaming/visioning phase. So we need to look at maintenance; upgrade; and new construction. Some buildings need to be razed. Some need new roof and some need work to facilitate better usage.

11. Excerpt from the minutes of the February 21, 2009 CCRM meeting

2. We need to determine how we can generate more income
 - a. **Camper numbers are smaller than anticipated**
 - b. **We need to know our breakeven enrollment**
3. Is the ministry still vital to IGRC? Can we continue to sustain 5 campsites?