

# New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ



July 16, 2018

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, we greet you in the name of Christ Jesus, our Savior and Shepherd.

Our purpose in writing is to update you on Horton Center, the outdoor ministries site of the New Hampshire Conference, particularly in regard to the work of the Board this last year toward developing a plan for the future of Horton Center.

First, we are pleased to report that summer is in full swing atop Pine Mountain! There was some concern over the winter about access to the camp after a storm in October (2017) caused significant damage to Pine Mountain Road. But working cooperatively with the National Forest Service, which owns most of the road, we were able to hire a contractor, who performed road repairs in a week's time in late May, which allowed us to open camp on schedule.

Tim Hughes, our camp's Interim Executive Director, has assembled an excellent and capable staff of 14 women and men, who have been at camp since mid-June. Registrations have been running slightly ahead of last year, and so far evaluations of the programs from campers have been positive.

In regard to the future of Horton Center, the Board of Directors this last year sought counsel from two professional camp consultants: 1) Kaleidoscope, and 2) United Camps, Conferences & Retreats (UCCR). Both consultants provided written reports based on extensive analysis of operations and user data, study of the camping and hospitalities market in New Hampshire, and on-site visits to Horton Center. (You can view their reports at: [www.nhcucc.org/conference-ministries/christian-formation-ministry/outdoor-ministries](http://www.nhcucc.org/conference-ministries/christian-formation-ministry/outdoor-ministries).)

In their reports, the consultants cited the benefits and strengths of Horton Center, especially:

- Its unmatched location in the majestic White Mountains, with extraordinary, unobstructed views of peaks and valleys.
- Extensive infrastructure and buildings on site, especially Spirit Lodge (dining hall and kitchen).
- Outdoor programming possibilities, including extensive hiking, rock climbing and outdoor camping.
- History of the camp and its transformational effect on generations of campers.

The consultants also identified these challenges and drawbacks:

- Horton Center cannot be utilized as a year-round facility.  
Roads accessing the camp—Pinkham B and Pine Mountain Roads—are inaccessible and closed for at least half a year.
- There are not enough beds to generate sufficient “camper days” to be financially viable.  
Horton Center has around 100 beds. If 20 are set aside for on-site staff, 80 would be available for campers. An eight-week season with at least 5 days of use per week would create 3,200 camper days (80 campers X 5 days X 8 weeks). In order to reach the 5,000 camper days that most camps require to be viable, Horton Center would need at least 125 campers for 5 days over 8 weeks. Current programming at Horton Center averages just over 1,300 camper days.
- Horton Center is not likely to attract many users beyond youth and children.  
Based on the bunk-style cabins and central bathrooms currently available, Horton Center is a classic, traditional youth camp. To serve effectively as an adult/family facility would require lodging that is more private with restrooms that are also more private.
- Major repairs and maintenance are needed for several buildings.  
There are structure and foundation issues with several camper cabins, as well as Hope Cabin and Old Lodge. Other needs include replacement of roofs, rot mitigation, addition of secondary entries or large windows (for emergency exit), general drainage and road maintenance.

Over the last few years, the cost of operations has been a major concern for the Board of Directors. Operating deficits, caused primarily by rising fixed costs (salaries, utilities, supplies) and low numbers of camper registrations, have increased to over \$100,000. Although it is not unusual for a Conference to support its outdoor ministries financially, high deficits of these amounts are unsustainable and have already had a negative impact on the ministries of the New Hampshire Conference, such as reduction in staffing and cuts in mission spending. (See the attached financial summary.)

With these facts and findings in mind, the Board of Directors, at its meeting on June 23, 2018, considered options for the future. Two options were quickly eliminated: 1) maintaining the status quo, that is, continuing operations at Horton Center under the current model; and 2) closing the camp and ending all programming on Pine Mountain.

Instead, the Board, after extensive discussion and consideration, voted unanimously to move toward the option of *partnering with others in outdoor ministries*. Specifically, this means that New Hampshire Conference will explore collaborating with neighboring Conferences to provide outdoor ministries programming across various locations, including Horton Center. This change would allow Horton Center to save costs by not having to hire its own staff for the entire summer, and would make the camp more available during summer months for rental by churches and outside groups.

The Board made this decision for two reasons:

1. New Hampshire already has experience doing common outdoor ministries programming with Vermont and Maine, and these have been popular among campers. This option means expanding upon this kind of programming.
2. Over the last year, Conference Ministers of New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine, have been discussing ways of sharing or collaborating in mission, particularly camping and outdoor ministries. All three of our Conferences are addressing the same challenges in similar ways, and the potential of doing outdoor ministries across Northern New England holds great appeal.

To initiate this decision to partner, the Board appointed a task force of its members who will sit with Maine and Vermont representatives to work out the details, especially for the coming 2019 summer season.

Along with this partnering decision, the Board has directed UCCR, one of the consultants, to conclude its analysis with a feasibility study for operating Horton Center. (UCCR operates camps, including youth-oriented ones like Horton Center, in California, the Mid-West and the Northeast.) In so doing, the Board leaves open a future option of inviting UCCR to manage Horton Center.

The Board also recognized that in consideration of any of the options (except the outright closing of the camp), long-term maintenance and capital improvements of Horton Center cannot continue to be deferred to the future. This separate, but necessary, effort means that the Conference will need to consider a special major financial campaign in the near future along with implementing a system of regular fundraising.

Finally, in a related development, the Board at its June 23 meeting learned of the potential loss of revenue from the cell tower atop Pine Mountain. Our cell tower operator has given us notice that the two largest tenants, AT&T and Verizon, have plans to build their own network of towers and will be ending the current practice of leasing tower space. This means that the annual revenue of over \$50,000 per year received from cell tower leases will very likely decrease in the near future.

Overall, while many details remain to be fleshed out, the Board of Directors feels very positively about these decisions for the future of Horton Center. We hope that this letter helps you understand why they feel that way. We welcome any questions or thoughts you might have, as well as your prayers for all those whose lives will continue to be touched through the ministries of special places like Horton Center.

Yours in the service of Christ,



Marcie Miller  
President



Charles Buck  
Transitional Conference Minister

## NH Conference Outdoor Ministries Financial Activity

	12/31/15 ACTUAL	12/31/16 ACTUAL	12/31/17 ACTUAL
<i>Total Number of Campers Registered</i>	325	380	365
<i>Total Camper Days (3 meals, 1 overnight)</i>	1,241	1,387	1,334
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<b>Outdoor Ministries Revenue</b>			
Camper Registrations	\$ 89,042	\$ 98,352	\$ 82,905
Scholarship Contributions	6,907	9,237	10,819
Facilities Rental	17,058	13,755	13,008
Donations	6,589	2,449	7,031
Investments and Restricted Funds	11,702	9,366	6,924
Miscellaneous	267	1,843	2,767
Camp Store Revenues	9,300	9,416	5,958
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>140,865</b>	<b>144,418</b>	<b>129,412</b>
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<b>Outdoor Ministries Expenses</b>			
<b>Personnel</b>			
Director	50,628	66,077	70,637
Site Manager	25,398	19,377	19,377
Seasonal Staff	45,291	53,236	49,276
Contract Staff	1,950	153	-
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>123,267</b>	<b>138,843</b>	<b>139,290</b>
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<b>Camp Operations</b>			
Food & Kitchen Supplies	14,954	15,867	16,920
Utilities	6,072	6,023	6,541
Maintenance, Repair, Vehicle	25,970	26,161	24,752
Insurance (Property and Workers Comp)	15,982	13,121	15,844
Supplies (Program, First Aid)	2,918	2,217	2,027
Camp Store Merchandise	6,986	7,238	3,464
<b>Total Camp Operations</b>	<b>72,882</b>	<b>70,627</b>	<b>69,548</b>
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<b>Administrative Expenses</b>			
Staff (Recruiting, Training, Expenses)	5,976	5,762	7,183
Office (Phone, Internet, Printing, Postage)	490	1,383	2,304
Fees, Licenses, Curriculum	7,792	14,861	15,466
Publicity & Promotion	4,798	4,080	3,423
Maine Conference Administrative Support	11,968	11,071	10,274
Miscellaneous	1,139	1,155	706
<b>Total Administrative</b>	<b>32,163</b>	<b>38,312</b>	<b>39,356</b>
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<b>Total Horton Center Expenses</b>	<b>228,312</b>	<b>247,782</b>	<b>248,194</b>
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<b>Net Program &amp; Admin Revenue (Expense)</b>	<b>\$ (87,447)</b>	<b>\$ (103,364)</b>	<b>\$ (118,782)</b>
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<b>Other Revenues and Expenses</b>			
Cell Tower Revenue	50,217	52,873	55,035