



Presbytery of Transylvania

Where the spirit unites us "across the woods"

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Dear Transylvania Presbytery,

At its August meeting, the presbytery approved the following motion: *that a sabbatical period for Camp Burnamwood begin on October 1, 2019, and last through calendar year 2020. At the 2020 Annual presbytery meeting, the Coordinating Commission will present a progress report to the presbytery updating the work of discernment of the camping ministry and outlining any recommended next steps.*

But what does this mean? The sabbatical means that the camp will not be hiring an Executive Director in the immediate future and that the camp will not be providing programming through the remainder of 2019 and all of 2020.

Does this mean the camp will be closing? No. The camp will be open to congregations and groups to rent and use. The camp will continue to be maintained by our property manager, and the hope is that congregations and groups will continue to use the camp.

Will there be camps for our youth to attend? We hope so! A number of our pastors and congregations have already committed to working together to create retreats at Camp Burnamwood for young people of all ages. The biggest hurdle to overcome, as far as providing camp ministry is concerned, will likely be summer camp. There are people working together to determine if this is feasible and how it might come about.

This sabbatical is a commitment by our presbytery to the ongoing vitality of the ministry of Camp Burnamwood. Transylvania Presbytery has invested \$1,000,000 in Camp Burnamwood over the past ten years and can't continue to do so without bankrupting the presbytery and with it, the camp. We face many other challenges beyond financing: smaller congregation sizes, fewer people taking advantage of camp programming, considerable competition from other area specialized camps, and camp infrastructure that has deteriorated significantly.

The good news is that other camps around the country have been in a similar situation, but they have found new and creative ways of becoming sustainable and transformative. The Coordinating Commission will be forming a Visioning Team that will be called to discern how this might happen for our camp.

Many of us know and resonate with the stories of Jesus taking time to step away from his regular ministry to pray. In fact, this is the exact reason many of us go to Burnamwood, to be in a place that's set apart so that we might return feeling rejuvenated and inspired. Our hope is that this sabbatical can provide the same for our camping ministry. Please keep the presbytery and all those engaged in this work in your prayers. If your questions haven't been answered, or if you have concerns or ideas, please feel free to contact any one of us.

Rev. Michael Ward, Moderator

Rev. Matt Falco, Chair, Burnamwood Commission

Rev. Jerry Utt, Stated Clerk

Rev. Philip Lotspeich, General Presbyter