



April 10, 2019

Dear Montana – N.Wyoming Conference UCC members and friends,

With a profound sense of responsibility for the stewardship of the Montana – Northern Wyoming Conference of the United Church of Christ (MNWC) and with deep respect for the attachment of many to Camp Mimanagish, the Board of Directors (BoD) sends you this letter.

At their morning April 8, 2019 meeting, the Conference Executive Committee reviewed the information that had been received from the 2019 Camp Mimanagish Advisory Council along with additional information from the Committee for Outdoor Ministry (COM) and the Conference Treasurer regarding the status of camp registrations and volunteers for 2019, fundraising efforts, and the financial position of the MNWC. A table containing a summary of the information is included with this letter.

After much heart-felt and prayerful deliberation, the Executive Committee made the following recommendation to the BoD, who unanimously (Trudi Downer, Terri Goodsell, Tracy Heilman, Phil Maxwell, Sheila Naismith, Pam Peterson, Leslie Roche, Lynne Spencer Smith, Rick Thompson) approved it at their afternoon April 8, 2019 meeting:

- 2019 will be a shortened Outdoor Ministry season in the MNWC to be held at Camp Mimanagish
- The 2019 Conference Annual Meeting, August 9 - 11, will be held at Camp Mimanagish and will include a celebration of Camp Mimanagish
- The 2020 Outdoor Ministry season for the MNWC will take place in locations other than Camp Mimanagish
- The MNWC will look at relinquishing the Forest Service Permit back to the Forest Service
The MNWC will seek to divest ourselves of the buildings and improvements at Camp Mimanagish. Options include, but are not limited to, selling the buildings to another 501c3 organization. We realize that we will need to maintain responsibility for the facilities until they change hands
- The MNWC will hold a de-commissioning event at Camp Mimanagish late spring/early summer (May or June) 2020. Should the sale or transfer of the facilities take place before this can happen, this de-commissioning event will be included in the purchase agreement

The BoD is now putting this recommendation before you, the members and friends of the MNWC churches, for your consideration. There will be a special meeting of the MNWC to vote on this recommendation on Thursday, July 11 at 7 pm held via Zoom. Prior to that meeting, there will be three hearings held via Zoom for interested individuals to hear more about the decision and bring their comments and questions. Information about how to access Zoom for these hearings will be emailed in the coming weeks and will be available at www.mnwcucc.org.

Those hearings will be held on

- Thursday, April 25 at 6:30 pm
- Tuesday, May 7 at 6:30 pm
- Sunday, June 9 at 12:30 pm

In addition, there will be an in-person hearing at Camp Mimanagish on Sunday, May 26, 2019 at 3:00 pm in conjunction with the Kick-off and Family Camp held that weekend. Please plan to participate in the hearing or hearings that best fit your schedule.

How did we get here?

Camp Mimanagish expenses have increased over the years at the same time that use has decreased. A decade ago, the BoD put together an advisory council of business leaders to recommend a business plan that could sustain Camp Mimanagish. The advised staff recommendations were not affordable until the MNWC received a \$100,000 donation in 2016 from the closure of Plentywood UCC. Our investment in professional camp staff provided two years of excellent experiences for campers, but did not substantially increase participation. Meanwhile, facility upgrades and deferred maintenance issues added to the fundraising requests made of our churches. Unfortunately, registrations and rentals have not provided the revenue needed to keep Camp Mimanagish operating.

At our October 2018 special meeting to approve the 2019 Conference and Outdoor Ministry budget, the second \$100,000 deficit budget in as many years was considered. Many delegates at this meeting said that this needed to be the last of such deficit budgets. The BoD formed a new Advisory Council to develop and recommend a business plan for Camp Mimanagish. This Advisory Council focused on camp promotions and local church support. Some of their recommendations were immediately implemented. A Partner Recruiter was hired who reached out to nearly 100 groups, but we were not able to secure sufficient new rentals. Knowing our churches were maxed out in their support of Camp Mimanagish greatly limited the Advisory Council's ability to create a viable business plan.

In their October 2018 vote, the MNWC delegates affirmed 2019 as a year to "buy time" to discern the future of Camp Mimanagish. The BoD set financial and registration benchmarks for the 2019 Camp Mimanagish season. With over 200 campers now registered, some further budget cuts, a \$50,000 gift to Camp Mimanagish, and some key fundraising events scheduled in our churches, we are able to assure that the 2019 camp season will happen at Camp Mimanagish.

How do we move forward?

The Committee for Outdoor Ministries has worked very hard to ensure that 2019 is a successful season. It is a season to celebrate the legacy which is Camp Mimanagish. It is a season to celebrate the hard work, heart and soul which it has taken to carry Camp Mimanagish through almost 90 years. It is a season to celebrate those who have been baptized or married at camp and to celebrate the lives of those whose memorials are indelibly linked to Camp Mimanagish. It is a season to provide transition to our campers who will move into the future to take the

steps of making new memories and new traditions. While it may seem final, it is not the end; it is part of the evolution of doing ministry.

In our MNWC, we have long associated Outdoor Ministries with Camp Mimanagish, as this has been our designated site since the 1930's. With the recommendation of your BoD, the concept of Outdoor Ministries will shift to the program of Outdoor Ministry and carry forward the emphasis on program regardless of location. Your BoD is committed to the continuation of Outdoor Ministry in our Conference.

As we look to 2020 and beyond, our Outdoor Ministries will continue to offer Transformational Experiences, with these experiences now located in new places. We look forward to building strong partnerships with neighboring UCC conferences as well as ecumenical camp and retreat centers. Possible partnerships could include:

- Participating in existing camp offerings
- Partnering to create and facilitate camp offerings
- Renting facilities for our unique camp offerings
- Utilizing our State and National Parks and Forests

Our 2019 Conference Annual Meeting will be held August 9-11 where it all began in 1930—at Camp Mimanagish. Our time together will be a home-coming, a family reunion, a time to celebrate and remember.

It is with heavy hearts that the BoD recommends divestiture of Camp Mimanagish after the 2019 season. May the words of the Rev. John Robinson, early church founder, provide some comfort and direction at this time, "there is yet more light and truth to break forth." Let us proceed with faith and hope that our Creator, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit still have very definite and concrete plans for the future of our Conference, its churches, its members (present and past), and friends. Let us continue our journey together.

In Christ,

Tracy Heilman, Moderator
Lynne Spencer Smith, Vice-Moderator
Leslie Roche, Secretary, Central Area at-large rep
Terri Goodsell, Treasurer
Tawnie Lehman, Human Resources Committee chair
Trudi Downer, Committee for Outdoor Ministries chair
Pam Peterson, Faith Formation Committee chair
Rick Thompson, Church and Ministry Commission chair
Sheila Naismith, East Area at-large rep
Phil Maxwell, West Area at-large rep
Gus Byrom, previous Moderator, ex-officio
Doug McClelland, United Church Board rep, ex-officio
Carol Shipley, United Church Board rep, ex-officio
Marc Stewart, Conference Minister, ex-officio

This chart shows the major considerations the Board of Directors reviewed in making the recommendation to relinquish Camp Mimanagish after the 2019 outdoor ministry season.

	2019 Season	Future of Outdoor Ministry 2020 and beyond	
		With Mimanagish	Without Mimanagish
Season	<i>Shortened season dates to accommodate rentals</i>	<i>Camp must function at or near capacity from midMay to midOctober</i>	<i>Camp/retreats can happen anytime/anywhere</i>
Facilities	<i>Full-Moon flooring and kitchen</i>	<i>Livingston, Managers Cabin, Bathrooms. To be competitive with other area camps, upgrades as well as maintenance is required.</i>	<i>Mimanagish facilities need to be divested; Potential to recoup some of investment; property insurance continues until divestment</i>
Operating Budget	<i>Adjust to season as need</i>	<i>Operations cost starting at \$175,000 in 2020 and increasing to at least \$225,000 per year; maintenance/development costs undetermined.</i>	<i>Transportation, scholarships, limited staffing that becomes part of the Conference budget.</i>
Camp Registration /Rentals	<i>210 UCC attendees/ Projected Revenue UCC Camps - \$65000 Rentals and other income\$21000 including CAM Total Revenue \$86,000</i>	<i>Revenue needed to cover anticipated minimum operating expenses of \$175,000-\$225,000 annually.</i>	<i>No minimum on registrations unless imposed by camp site provider</i>
Staff Positions	<i>Program Manager, volunteer Need Camp Director Need Facilities Coordinator</i>	<i>Year-round, full-time director Long-term plan for staffing, building remodels</i>	<i>Reduced staffing needs – both for camp and office. Moving from Facility-oriented staff to Program-oriented staff</i>
Fundraising/Special Giving	<i>Through March, Churches have given nearly \$16000; individuals \$2000. COM has been able to cut \$30000 from the 2019 budget; remaining amount needed is about \$7000. Several fundraisers and giving opportunities occur during April and May. In addition, \$50,000 was given by an anonymous donor towards 2019 Camp.</i>	<i>\$1.5 million professional Cap. Campaign to fund 5 years of facility and staffing. At current registration levels, annual operating funds shortage of \$130,000 exists. This does not include maintenance and development costs. At the end of 5 years, registration needs to have risen to a level where donations can reasonably fill the shortfall. If camp fees cover operating expenses, donations could be limited to funding maintenance/development projects and scholarships- \$30,000-\$40,000 annually</i>	<i>Fundraising for scholarships and transportation</i>
COM Volunteers	<i>Strong but lean COM</i>	<i>Major enhancements to volunteer network needed</i>	<i>Strong but lean COM</i>
Program Leaders/Counselor Recruitment	<i>10 volunteer counselors 3 UCC Summer interns (2 counselors, 1 at large) Requested 2 Vista volunteers</i>	<i>Assuming increased revenue comes from rentals, program leaders and counselors can stay the same.</i>	<i>Counselor recruitment and program leaders decreases by at least half. Some programming may be provided by the host site camp.</i>
Mission	<i>to Celebrate Mimanagish as an Outdoor Ministry venue since 1930</i>	<i>Place of continued wilderness ministry. Ministry legacy continued</i>	<i>Transformational experiences in places where we are not now</i>

ZOOM Connection Information for Hearings and Special Meeting

- by computer with video, mic, and speakers: <https://zoom.us/j/5163956042>
- by smartphone: +16699006833,,5163956042#
- by dial-in: +1 669 900 6833 Meeting ID: 516 395 6042