

LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY

Last weekend, May 30-31, 2009, about 200 people from 42 local churches participated in five Pilgrim Point Camp Listening Sessions. Eight members of the Board of Directors facilitated the conversations. Staff members functioned as scribes and process observers.

Each of the gatherings began with participants listing what they hoped would emerge from the conversation. **The primary hopes were these:**

- That vital ministry with children and youth will continue to take place (and – for many of the participants – that Pilgrim Point Camp will be part of this);
- That Pilgrim Point Camp can be saved to provide joy, beauty and spirit for years to come;
- That greater understanding will be achieved about what is happening and why; clarity will be gained about the Board decision and how we got here; confidence given that the Board has considered all options;
- That we can come together to find new vision and new possibilities for outdoor ministries.

Certain themes emerged repeatedly and in various ways and might be summarized as follows:

- Concern for how the decision was made
- Questions about the extent to which this decision has been driven by money vs. mission/ministry
- Concern for the costs/outcomes of suspending operations
- Perception that this action seems sudden and extreme and the desire for an interim option
- Confusion about the money – particularly about the Ashley Endowment
 - e.g. – who makes the decisions about how these dollars are allocated and what are the criteria?
- Suggestion to borrow against the Ashley or borrow against the property
- Management concerns of various sorts
- Marketing concerns and a widespread conviction that we should do this better and in more places
- Fundraising – persuasion that people are willing to give to Pilgrim Point Camp; recommendation of consideration of a major fundraising campaign
- Camp strengthens UCC identity of persons who participate and that Pilgrim Point Camp is an important part of MN UCC identity
- Camp is a place for smaller churches to do programming for children and youth
- Camp is a place of faith formation and vocational calling
- Camp is a place to express our concern for “going green” and for environmental stewardship

One of the blessings of sharing perspectives and ideas is that **a number of constructive suggestions** emerged.

1) Several proposed that we make an effort to get younger children involved in camping (e.g., third through eighth grades) – when competition from specialty camps and school activities is not yet intense. Others, however, worried that there are greater safety concerns with younger children.

2) A number of participants urged paying attention to and learning from camps that ARE succeeding.

3) We heard support for a shortened camping season in 2010 and/or a desire to make it possible for churches of the Minnesota Conference UCC to rent the camp during the summer of 2010.

4) We were encouraged to develop partnerships with other organizations or agencies.

5) A few proposed that we sell part of the camp to provide several years of running money.

In general, there was encouragement to establish a process that would permit more input from a wider audience.

Finally, **several concerns** were raised that warrant naming.

1. The difficulty of securing the property, particularly from lakeshore entry.
2. The loss of relationships, particularly for those who have met annually at Pilgrim Point.
3. That the camp will be sold.

Participants were genuinely concerned about how children and youth will be ministered to through the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ.

Number of Churches represented: (42)

Ada, Faith	Minneapolis, Lyndale
Alexandria, First Congregational	Minneapolis, Mayflower
Anoka, First Congregational	Minneapolis, Parkway
Austin, First Congregational	Minnesota Lake, Peace UCC
Benson, Pilgrim	New Brighton UCC
Bertha, Faith UCC	New Ulm UCC
Brainerd, First Congregational UCC	Norwood Young America, St. John's UCC
Detroit Lakes, The Congregational Church	Robbinsdale UCC
Edina, Edina-Morningside	Rochester, Congregational
Fairmont, First Congregational	Rochester, Peace
Falcon Heights UCC	St. Louis Park, Union
Freeborn UCC	St. Paul, Cherokee Park United Church
Gaylord UCC	St. Paul, Hazel Park UCC
Granite Falls UCC	St. Paul, St. Anthony Park UCC
Hopkins, Mizpah	Sauk Centre, First United
Le Sueur, Zion UCC	Sherburn, First Congregational UCC
Mankato, First Congregational	Stillwater, St. Peter's UCC
Maple Grove, Pilgrims	Wadena, First Congregational UCC
Maple Lake, Bethlehem	Waubun, Circles of Faith
Millville, Grace	Welcome, St. Paul's UCC
Minneapolis, First Congregational	Zumbrota, First Congregational

Numbers of persons present

Alexandria	65
Maple Grove	29
Rochester	27
Gaylord	30
New Brighton	46

Total: 197

