

A REPORT AND MOTION FROM THE BOARD OF CAMPS AND RETREAT MINISTRIES (BCRM) TO THE FLORIDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

August 26, 2020

BCRM REPORT ON THE CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE MOTION:

The Board of Camps and Retreat Ministries (BCRM) has been in dialogue over many years on the essential topics of the missional alignment and sustainability of our camps and retreat ministries in Florida. The BCRM is mandated to do this work by Paragraph 411.2 of the Florida Annual Conference Standing Rules: “The Board of Camps and Retreat Ministries shall be responsible for the development of a vision and mission for the camps and retreat centers of the Conference that aligns with that of the Florida Conference.” Furthermore, the BCRM is responsible for (according to Standing Rule Paragraph 411.4): “overseeing the ministry and properties of all Conference camps and retreat centers” while it “envisions, supports, and empowers the staff of the camps and retreat centers with regards to ministry, financial development, marketing and occupancy.”

In 2005, the BCRM worked on a Comprehensive Master Plan for the four sites in Florida at that time: Warren Willis Camp, Life Enrichment Center, Riverside Camp and Retreat Center, and Lake Asbury Retreat Center. Lake Asbury Retreat Center was later closed and sold by the Annual Conference in 2010. Centenary Camp was a former Tallahassee district camp that became part of the Annual Conference Camps and Retreat Ministries in 2009. In 2016, the BCRM decided to merge the operations of the Warren Willis Camp and Life Enrichment Center and rebrand the two sites as the Warren Willis Camp and Conference Center. When the BCRM meets for its oversight work, they think of three sites: Warren Willis Camp and Conference Center in Fruitland Park, Riverside Camp and Retreat Center in Labelle, and Centenary Camp in Quincy. ([Link](#))

The BCRM is committed to ensuring missional alignment, sustainability and innovation at all of our sites. Since 2005, the Comprehensive Master Plan has been redeveloped and retooled to meet the emerging needs of camp and retreat participants as well as the changing landscape of camp and retreat usage. There has been an ongoing conversation about the need for additional capital funds to update the camp and retreat sites and care for the continued and significant deferred maintenance costs. More recently, the discussion has focused on the current and future use and sustainability of both Centenary Camp and Riverside Camp and Retreat Center.

It has become clear there is a long term need to evaluate the ability of the Florida Annual Conference to fully utilize and support multiple sites in multiple parts of the state. This evaluation of camp and retreat ministries has been done in collaboration with other Conference leaders, including the Conference Board of Trustees and the Conference Council on Finance and Administration. In the last two years, each of these committees have had conversations and raised concerns about the ongoing need to evaluate our camp and retreat ministries and work toward a more sustainable and productive future model. These are ongoing and extensive deliberations. In the last two years, both Centenary Camp and the Riverside Camp and Retreat Center have seen some improvement on various fronts due to the diligent leadership of their respective site directors. Even so, the BCRM, along with other Conference leaders, believes there are significant questions at both Centenary and Riverside related to the historical and current net negative financial position of both sites and the lack of sustained ministry programs connected to the mission of the Annual Conference to justify the financial expense.

As we prepare for the September 2020 Virtual Annual Conference session, the BCRM believes this is the time to take the next faithful steps in the process of evaluating two of our sites: Centenary Camp and Riverside Camp and Retreat Center. The proposed next step is permission-giving, creating a framework for the ongoing work of collaboration and consultation. The BCRM and the Conference Board of Trustees believe it is in the best interest of the Florida Annual Conference to secure approval and permission from the Annual Conference to possibly sell all, or portions of, the Conference-owned camp and retreat properties at Centenary Camp and Riverside Camp and Retreat Center.

The below motion was passed at the BCRM meeting on July 27, 2020 and sent to the Conference Board of Trustees for their approval. The Conference Board of Trustees considered and approved the motion at their meeting on August 13, 2020. The motion is now presented to the Annual Conference at its virtual session scheduled for September 19, 2020. Paragraph 2516 of the *Book of Discipline* requires approval and authorization by the Annual Conference for any actions to sell camp properties.

This motion is written and intended as a permission-giving motion that allows further evaluation and investigation to continue. This motion does not presume the BCRM or Board of Trustees has reached the end of their deliberative evaluation. It provides for the work of discernment over the next year to not be dependent on future Annual Conference approval. Furthermore, the BCRM is not suggesting either Centenary Camp or Riverside Camp and Retreat Center be immediately closed or placed on the market for sale even if the Annual Conference approves this motion. We are aware we are in the middle of an unprecedented time and amid ever-changing shifts in the use of various ministries within the Annual Conference. The BCRM seeks not to be reactive but responsive, deliberate and effective in its responsibility for oversight.

If the Annual Conference approves the below motion, the BCRM and the Director of Camps and Retreat Ministries will continue to work with the directors of both Centenary Camp and Riverside Camp and Retreat Center to keep them open and operational until there is final discernment about the future. Camp management will focus on reducing operational expenses while increasing usage of the sites in creative and innovative ways as we all continue to adapt to the changing landscape that surrounds us. Additionally, the BCRM would collaborate with the Conference Board of Trustees to further understand the real estate market and comparable sites around Centenary and Riverside and the feasibility and prudence of considering selling only portions of Riverside Camp and Retreat Center.

The BCRM and the Conference Trustees are keenly aware that any conversation about a camp and retreat center involves vibrant memories of life-changing ministry for countless people. It further involves committed staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to continue maintaining and promoting the vital work of camp and retreat ministries. We deeply honor all of this and believe that the work of oversight and evaluation encourages us to consider this next faithful step in the journey.

The BCRM is incredibly grateful to the entire Annual Conference for their support of camp and retreat ministries. We welcome the ongoing collaboration with the Annual Conference as we remain *On Mission Together*.

MOTION FROM THE BOARD OF CAMPS AND RETREAT MINISTRIES (note: this motion has been reviewed and affirmed by the Conference Board of Trustees):

To ensure the missional alignment and sustainability of our camps and retreat ministries, the Board of Camps and Retreat Ministries requests approval from the Florida Annual Conference that the Board of Trustees of the Florida Conference be authorized to sell all, or portions of, the Conference-owned camp and retreat properties at Centenary Camp and Riverside Camp and Retreat Center if the BCRM determines any such sale to be in the best interest of the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Any such sale of all, or portions of, Centenary Camp and/or Riverside Camp and Retreat Center would take place after additional discernment and exploration and be subject to the final approval of the Board of Trustees of the Florida Conference. The Trustees will act on behalf of the Annual Conference to ensure that the interests and benefits of the Conference are secured and will act as the agent of the Conference in completion of the sale. The Conference Board of Trustees is authorized to negotiate and contract for the sale according to the standards and authority as set forth in the *Discipline*. The proceeds of any such sale would be held by the Board of Trustees of the Florida Conference and must be directed by them to other camp and retreat ministries within the Florida Conference.