

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda
Synod Camp Board
Board Convener's Report
November 5, 2016

This report highlights some of the areas in which the Synod Camp Board has been working since Synod last met.

Board

I continually give thanks for the level of commitment and hard work displayed by the volunteers who make up the Synod Camp Board. Being a member of the Board means making a significant investment of time, and without the people who are willing to serve in this way, there simply would not be a camping ministry in this Synod.

The current members of the Synod Camp Board, with their areas of responsibility, are as follows:

The Rev. Alex Bisset (convener)
Natasha Crompton-Dunn (marketing)
The Rev. Bethany McCaffrey (secretary)
Lisa Riess (human resources)
Todd Savill (treasurer)

Each of these people values the ministry of the Synod's camps, and brings their own set of skills and experiences to bear on the decisions that we must make and the work that we must do.

Over the past few months, several members of the Board decided, for a variety of reasons, that they could not continue to serve. Members who stepped down this year include the Rev. Wes Denyer (who had been on a leave of absence from board duties), the Rev. Jen Sokolowsky, Lynn McKibbin-Brown, Bill Welch, and Neil Rome. I extend my thanks to all of these individuals for the work that they put into serving our camps.

We are now in the somewhat enviable position of having more people express an interest in serving on the Board than we have space to fill. (The Board's terms of reference indicate that it should have between 7 and 9 members. Members of the Board are appointed by the Board, with the convener being appointed by Synod or its Executive.) We are therefore working on formulating a process that would enable the Board to identify which of the interested people

might be most helpful to the Board at this time, and will be adding Board members in the coming weeks to bring our numbers back up to the levels that they should be at.

Staffing

In our last report to the Synod, the Board noted that the search process for an Executive Director was drawing to an end, and we that were close to announcing the hiring of a successful candidate. Just a few days before the last meeting of Synod, the Board had met to interview two people that had been shortlisted by our search committee. The Board had, by the time Synod met, already made a decision to make an offer to David Scott, who had formerly served as Director of Camp Kwasind (CBOQ), but that offer had not yet been accepted, and so it could not be announced. David accepted the Board's offer the week after the Synod meeting, and the hiring was announced on November 25.

David brought with him a number of both hard and soft skills. He was tremendously successful at arranging for donations of supplies and gifts in kind. In a short period of time, he made a number of improvements to the Glen Mhor and Iona site, and made a number of changes to our programs to bring us into compliance with both health and safety and labour regulations. Change, however, is always difficult, and perhaps nowhere more so than in camping ministries, where there is often a strong desire for the things one loved as a child or teenager to remain static. As winter moved into spring and the camp season approached, tensions rose, and during the first half of May it became apparent to the Board that a resolution to these tensions was necessary.

On May 18, the Board met and agreed, with reluctance, to terminate David Scott's employment as Executive Director without cause, effective May 31. While this was not the outcome that anyone wanted, this was a mutually agreeable separation. The news was communicated to the year-round and spring staff and then to the wider camp and Synod community on May 24.

This decision left the Board, just a few weeks from the start of camp season, with no Executive Director. But God has a way of helping people be where they are needed when they are needed, and it came to our notice that the Rev. Jeffrey Crawford, who had formerly served as the Synod Youth Consultant and was currently the minister of Trinity, Oro, would be out of a job as of May 31 as well. After a number of discussions with Jeffrey and the clerk of the Presbytery of Barrie, the Board offered Jeffrey a part-time, 3 month contract as interim Executive Director, to see us through the summer months.

I cannot say enough about the contributions that Jeffrey brought to camp this summer. His experience, not only in our Synod but prior to that as Associate Director of the Center for Youth

and Young Adult Ministry at the PCUSA's Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina meant that he could step into the camp context and help with staff training and supervision as well as site work and in many other areas as well. He also served as a wonderfully calming presence both after the transitions of the spring and in preparation for the transitions to come in the fall. I am extremely grateful that Jeff was both available and willing to help us out throughout the summer, and for his willingness to continue to assist the Board as it moves ahead.

In late July, Chantal Jackson, who has been with camp in a variety of ways for 17 years, and who was an integral part of our year-round staffing team for the past 8 years, announced that she had decided it was time for her to move on. Chantal worked until the end of her most recent contract, which ended on October 31, 2016. Over the years, she brought her unique skills and boundless energy to all of the positions she has served in, and she made her mark on camp in a number of ways. She will be missed.

The Board decided that attempting to fill two vacant positions at the same time was more than could be handled well, and also agreed that it was most important that the Camp Director position vacated by Chantal be filled first. The Board therefore appointed a search committee in mid-August, and a number of applications were received from inside the current camp community. Interviews were conducted, and the search committee recommended one candidate to the Board for its approval. This approval was given unanimously, and on September 23 it was announced that Robynne "Mapes" Howard would be our new Camp Director.

Robynne has been part of the Cairn community since 2012, when she served as the assistant administrator. Since then she has been a member of the counselling team and a member of the program staff team as Adventure Programmer. In the 2016 camp season, she filled the roles of Programme Director and Outdoor Centre Director. Robynne has also worked two fall seasons and one winter season at YMCA Camp Wanakita on their outdoor centre staff. When we hired her this fall, she was fulfilling the role of the Head Facilitator at Wanakita, working alongside the Outdoor Centre Director and Outdoor Centre Coordinator to organize and run staff training week, manage programs, coordinate school groups, and be a resource and support to the other members of the program staff team.

Robynne is a graduate of McGill University with a double major in Psychology and International Development Studies. An extensive history in summer camping and love of working in child development led her to pursue her passion for outdoor education and camping after graduation. I invite you to join me in welcoming Mapes to our Cairn camping team. I could not be more pleased, and am looking forward to working with her in the months and years to come.

The Board believes that a time of intentional interim leadership is needed within the Cairn Family of Camps before the next Executive Director is hired. We are currently working to hire an interim ED, who will work until the conclusion of the 2017 camp season, and we hope that by then we will be in a solid position to hire on a permanent basis.

While this time of transition, like any period of change, has not been easy, we are looking forward with confidence to the future that God holds in store for all of our camps and the children and youth who attend them.

Glen Mhor and Iona

Thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers, we had a tremendously successful camp season at Glen Mhor and Iona in 2016. Registrations were up, and the programs ran smoothly. A number of improvements and repairs were made to the site this year, and more are planned for next year. The largest item on the list for next year is the replacement of the roof over the Lodge and kitchen areas before the camp season begins. This will be done almost entirely using donated materials and labour, thanks to an extremely generous supplier and a talented pool of volunteers.

The problems with our water system are now behind us, and we continue to work hard to ensure our compliance with provincial water regulations. This year, we hired a local company to help us with training staff for water testing and to act in an advisory capacity. We also began working to find a way to deal with the raw sewage collected from our bucket latrine facilities. It is worth noting at this time that we are not the only camp board struggling to deal with increasing regulation of water, septic, and other systems. The ELCIC a few weeks ago announced that Camp Edgewood, in Eden Mills, would be closed at the end of 2016, due to government regulations for septic systems.

It is also worth noting to the Synod that as a camp we are required to comply with the regulations of Ontario's new accessibility standards. We are not yet sure exactly what this will mean for us in the future, but we do know that it will mean significant changes to our site and the way that we operate during the camping season.

This is a challenging time to be in camping ministries, but we are working to meet the challenges and to do all we can to guarantee that our camps will make the leap into the future.

Dorothy Lake

Permission was granted by Synod in 2014 for the Camp Board and Synod Executive to work together to dispose of the former Dorothy Lake Camp property. This process has taken some time, but I am pleased to announce that the process of transferring the camp property to the Beaverhouse First Nation is nearly complete. This will ensure that the camp continues to play an important and central role in the life of the children of the Kirkland Lake area.

Finances

A summary financial statement for 2015 is attached. During 2015, the unrest in the school system led to a decline in rental revenue. We were prepared for the decline in the Synod grant, which dropped by \$4,000, but the decrease in rental income coupled with significantly increased costs for food and utilities left us with an operating deficit of \$16,816.

At the present time, the Camp Board is temporarily without its charitable status. This will be restored by the end of the year and the restoration will be retroactive. One of the reasons for this is that when the charitable status was first applied for, we were given an extension of the PCC's number, and the national church now (wisely) is trying to ensure that all entities of the church have their own completely independent number. Staff in the finance department at church offices have expressed their confidence that the situation will be resolved very soon.

Conclusion

The Board is grateful for the tremendous work of our staff. In particular, thanks are extended to Jeffrey Crawford for his willingness to help us through the summer, and to Chantal Jackson for her leadership, experience, and hard work over the past eight years.

We thank the Synod for its ongoing financial support. We are also grateful for the support received from the congregations and families of the Synod, and for the continued prayers of God's people. Together, and by the grace of Christ Jesus and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are able to continue the amazing and extraordinary work that God has called us to do through the camping ministries of our Synod.

Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. W. Alex Bisset
Convener