

Report to the Emergent Meeting of the Synod re Funding of Camping Ministries

At the 2024 meeting of the Synod, a Working Group was struck to look at the Camping Ministries and specifically, the funding options and models for this ministry.

This Working Group, which included representatives from the Synod Executive, the Cairn Camp Board, Camp Staff (Executive Director) and was convened by Rev. Cherie Inksetter, offered a preliminary report to the Synod Executive on March 19, 2025. A complete report, which included several recommendations, was received by Synod Executive on October 1, 2025.

Synod Executive decided that a Task Force be struck to report to an emergent meeting of Synod to deal with the Working Group's report. The Task Force was to present concrete financial proposals for at least the next three years to this emergent meeting, which is to be held before November 30. The Task Force as named by Synod Executive was to consist of Alex Bisset, Don Laity, George Myers, Rob McMaster, and Michael Nettleton, plus ex-officio members Cherie Inksetter, Michelle Roberts, Jonathan Tait, and Karen Pozios. The Synod at its regular meeting on October 8, 2025, affirmed this decision, and called Synod to meet in emergent session on November 26, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

The Task Force met twice, on October 23 & October 31. The report that follows is based on the text of the report of the original Working Group, with revisions and more specific financial details added by the Task Force.

We begin by saying that Camp Cairn had a successful year, with many wonderful ministry moments. Children and youth came together and learned about Jesus Christ and his love for them, faith was strengthened and matured, and most wonderfully, there were adult (staff) who asked to be baptized. Chaplains from across the Synod attended camp and were blessed by their time there.

There was an overture that was presented at General Assembly to "explore having a National Camp Ministry Board to work alongside and fund camps across the country under a single umbrella". This will be sent to a committee

for exploration with recommendations expected to be presented to the 2026 General Assembly. We may not see the results of any recommendations for at least another year after that. We think this is a step in the right direction and would encourage the committee to prayerfully consider this.

This year, there was not a Camp Director on site as she was on maternity leave. There had been an attempt to replace her for this year, but unfortunately we were not able to fill this role. This left the Executive Director and others to pick up the work normally done by the Camp Director. It should be noted that the primary reason that we did not have successful candidates for the position was that the compensation offered was insufficient to attract quality candidates. This will be a recurrent theme throughout this report.

There are 4 areas related to funding that we will address: Seasonal Staff compensation, Permanent Staff compensation, Capital Funding and Fundraising.

To begin: the question of Seasonal Staff. At the moment we are currently compensating our seasonal staff, i.e. counsellors, at the rate of \$52 per day. This was raised from \$40 over last year, mostly due to an increase in the budgeted amount from Synod which was increased by \$20,000. It should be noted that this increase did not cover all additional increases and money was needed to be drawn from the Operating Budget.

In order to understand how the seasonal staff are compensated, a little background. Camp staff are exempt from minimum wage requirements according to the government, but this does not make it the best model. Currently our staff is paid for an 8 hour day, even though they are on site and ‘working’ 22 hours per day. They currently work 6 days, with one day off. If they were to be paid even minimum wage for those 8 hours, it would mean that they would receive \$140.80 per day, a significant increase, but not when considering the hours that they are expected to work.

As you might expect, young people who would like to be seasonal staff are not encouraged by the current level of compensation as they need funds to be able to pay for post secondary education, and in relation to other jobs that they might take, this level of compensation is woefully inadequate. This precludes many from applying even if they are passionate about ministry. We

truly want to have our young people involved in sharing the love of Jesus with others, but if we cannot offer them something more, they are forced to look elsewhere for employment. It should be understood that it is not just private sector jobs that are paying better, there are other PCC camps that are paying their seasonal staff much more than Cairn is able to offer.

We recognize that to be able to offer higher compensation means that we will need more funding from Synod. We are not recommending a jump to minimum wage all at once, but to make it a goal to achieve that goal over the next few years. We want to ensure that once we raise their compensation, we cannot go back the following year. To that end, we recommend:

Recommendation # 1: That Synod budget an additional \$61,000 to be able to offer the seasonal staff compensation of \$75 per day with a goal to increase compensation in the next few years incrementally until minimum wage is achieved.

How this will be achieved:

In 2026 we have increased the grant to the camp by \$30,000 and we will allot \$30,000 from the Operating Budget and withdraw 5% from the Ministries Fund (as is allowed in the Standing Orders) for 2025 (this is calculated as of the previous years balance, so \$441,940 @ 5% = \$22,097) and allocating it to the 2026 staff salaries.

\$30,000 plus \$125,000 already in budget

\$22,097 from the Ministries Fund in 2025

\$24,875 from the Ministries Fund in 2026

\$76,972

Total \$201,976

(This number will also offset the Permanent Staff salaries noted below.)

In 2027 we propose to increase the seasonal staff salaries to \$85/day, and to increase the Permanent Staff salaries by 10% plus COLA, as set by the PCC.

In 2028 we propose to increase the seasonal staff salaries to \$95/day, and to increase the Permanent Staff salaries by 10% plus COLA, as set by the PCC.

(Please note that the maximum 5% withdrawal for 2025 will be \$22,097 and for 2026 will be \$33,588 which we anticipate is a sustainable rate for the Ministries fund to allocate and not appreciably impact the principal)

Our permanent staff, likewise, are not being compensated in parity with industry standards as well. To compare: Executive Director positions for charity run camps have compensation levels of \$70,000 to \$90,000 whereas Cairn is currently paying \$54,000. This is exclusive of housing which is also standard in this industry. Posted Camp Director positions range from \$60-\$80,000 and we pay \$48,000 with no housing or housing allowance. Site Director positions are posted from \$45-\$50,000 and we are paying \$30,000. Over the last 7 years, with the exception of a few small increases for the Camp Director and the Site Director, there has only been a COLA increase. Similar to our Seasonal Staffing recommendation, we are not recommending a jump to achieving parity all at once, but to make it a goal to achieve that goal over the next few years. We recommend:

Recommendation # 2: That Synod budget an additional \$15,972 to be able to increase all Permanent Staff compensations, by 10% plus COLA (which is set at 2.1% at the General Assembly) for 2026 with a goal to increase compensation in the next few years incrementally until industry parity is achieved.

(See above)

The Ministries fund that the Synod oversees was originally intended to support ministries within the Synod. Our camp is one of these significant ministries. While there may have been intention at one time to allow this fund to grow until it reached \$1,000,000 before drawing on it, we need to recognize that there is need NOW and we should not wait any longer before beginning to draw on the assets we have. At the General Assembly there was conversation that perhaps Synods would be phased out at some point. Should that happen, these funds would not likely be given to the Presbyteries, but would be absorbed by the denomination. We should use these funds to aid our camp ministries now, rather than ‘waiting for a rainy day’, because the flood waters are rising. So, our third recommendation:

Recommendation #3: That the cost of staffing increases be drawn in part from the Ministries Fund, being \$22,097 in 2025 and \$33,588 in 2026.

(See above)

Looking ahead to 2027

With these additional increases will need to be \$222,000 less guestimate of \$33,000 from the Ministries Fund, leaving a 2027 necessary net grant of \$190,000 or net deficit of \$80,000

In 2028 we would then have a grant of \$242,000 less \$33,000 or net grant of \$209,000 or net deficit of \$102,000.

Without additional funding from the Presbyteries, this will deplete the principal faster than originally intended.

The funding working group proposed below will need to take this information into account. As well, this speaks to the need for Presbyteries and congregations to consider whether the ministry done at Camp Cairn is worth considering as a ministry that they could support more fully. The funding group should also look at this and how they might bring this to the attention of Presbyteries and congregations.

The Camp facilities have had some upgrades in recent years, but there are still many capital improvements that are pressing. One of the primary ones is to improve accessibility but there are other improvements as well as general maintenance that has been left undone due to funding challenges. We have seen in the last few years many of our churches close and when this happens, 60% of the realized assets are returned to the Presbytery. Much of these funds are being invested or being under-utilized because there are not ministries that are being presented as needing these funds. To that end, we have 2 recommendations:

Recommendation #4: That Synod direct the Presbyteries within their bounds to prayerfully consider gifting the Synod Ministries Fund with 5% of the proceeds received from closed, dissolved or amalgamated

congregations going forward, specifically for capital upgrades at the camp.

Recommendation #5: That Synod direct the Presbyteries within their bounds, to prayerfully consider gifting the Synod Ministries Fund with 5% of the funds that may have been realized from the sale of previously closed congregations that was dedicated to the missions of the church and that might be still available for these purposes (ie in investments controlled by the Presbyteries). These would specifically go to the Camp for capital upgrades at the camp.

We realize that these are significant financial asks, and we do not ask them lightly or without considerable thought and prayer. We also realize that we need to be able to create a sustainable stream of funding for Camp Cairn. At the moment, 23% of the Camp's funding comes from Synod, and the Permanent staff do a considerable amount of work looking for and applying for grants from government, private sector and denominational sources. This takes an inordinate amount of time, time that could be spent on ministry or letting our Presbyteries know about the good work of camp. We further recognize that we, as a Synod, have responsibility for our funding as well. In the past there have been committees that were struck to aid with funding as well as sharing information with Presbyteries and congregations. Much of this work is still to be undertaken. We therefore recommend:

Recommendation # 6: That the Synod immediately strike a permanent Funding and Marketing Committee to undertake the work of soliciting funds from a variety of sources for the work of ministry within the Synod. This would include but is not limited to work of Camp Cairn and that this group be encouraged to determine the cost benefit of hiring a professional grant finding company and/or marketing company that might result in donations within the church and in the wider world.

We, as a Synod, and as Camp Cairn, are committed to reaching the next generation with the Good News of Jesus Christ, to bringing young people to faith, to maturing their faith and connecting young people, children and their families with God and with their local Presbyterian churches. This will only serve to strengthen our churches and our denominations for the future.

Camps are a significant way of doing this important work and we want to be able to do it for the foreseeable future. With your careful consideration of our recommendations, we are hopeful that we can.