

## FAQ from the three 2023 Special Annual Conference information sessions

### 2024 Budget Recommendation

Q: Where is the budget on the Annual Conference agenda?

A: The disaffiliate vote is the first agenda item and the effective date of disaffiliation will be October 31. The budget comes next.

Q: Where are monies from disaffiliating churches going?

A: About half goes to the board of pensions. Of the remaining half, about a third goes to the General Church, 15-20% goes to the districts, and the balance to the Conference. Loans that are repaid go to the lending entity (district or Conference Trustees/Church Extension Fund). The extra year of apportionments from the disaffiliations effective December 31, 2022, were largely budgeted for 2023.

Q: Where do closed church monies go?

A: When a church closes, and there is property, it becomes the administrative and financial responsibility of the Conference Board of Trustees. Cash proceeds from church sales are allocated between an endowment that supports new and revitalizing churches and the balance remains in cash for immediate support of local church and other needs. The Extended Cabinet makes determinations on grants from the cash portion. Endowment distributions flow through the Fresh Starts and New Beginnings grant process. In the 2024 Fresh Starts and New Beginnings grant budget, \$70,000 will come from the endowment portion of the closed church fund and \$100,000 from the cash portion of the closed church fund.

Q: How will the \$250,000 grant from the Conference Board of Pensions work?

A: Pensions are about benefits, yes, but the discipline grants the BOP broader latitude. It is not new spending, however. Historically, districts have pieced together resources to make an appointment work for a church and pastor. Now we are putting the resources at the cabinet level, which means districts will not need to apportion for these expenses nor will district reserves or fund balances be used. The Cabinet and the BOP have developed an agreement that ensures all grants are in keeping with the BOP's purpose.

Q: How are we funding new church starts?

A: New churches are funded from annual payouts from the closed church "Light the Way" endowment, cash disbursements from the closed church fund, apportionments, and donor restricted funds from prior capital campaigns.

Q: I made a donation to a now disaffiliated church that was restricted for a specific purpose. What will happen to my gift and its intended purpose?

A: Churches that are disaffiliated are still non-profits and are required to honor a donor's request. The disaffiliation should not affect that.

### Trustee Recommendation to sell two camps

Q: How many of the 25 interviews by Cramer reflect those who have donated to camps or been on the camp properties?

A: The 25 donors who were interviewed were in two broad categories: (1) those who have given major gifts to the Conference through past campaigns or have the capacity and inclination to

make a major gift and (2) those who have shown a strong history of giving to the Conference and/or have given consistently to camps but not a major donor levels. About half of the interviewees were strong supporters of camps or have previously donated to West Ohio camping ministries. This cross-section of donors and those interested in camps provided the consultant with the information needed to assess the likelihood that donors would support a comprehensive campaign to support children, youth, and young adult (CYAA) ministries including capital needs to retain Camp Wesley. Interviewees were chosen from donors known to the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio.

Q: Would you consider modifying the motion to include camps for families/multiple generations?

A: A camp that is part of a Children, Youth, and Young Adult initiative will provide retreat ministries for all ages.

Q: What would be the estimated financial impact if on the Annual Conference floor, the sale of Camp Wesley was successfully substituted for Otterbein?

A: All camp properties are significantly behind on deferred maintenance and require major capital investments. Given this fact and because the sale of Camp Otterbein is expected to result in more cash proceeds than Camp Wesley, the Capital Campaign goal would likely increase. Based on what we know from the Cramer Philanthropy capital campaign study, that is not a sure thing.

Q: Will we pool camps and retreats resources with East Ohio?

A: West Ohio is responsible for this situation and West Ohio will have to resolve it. Other than collaboration on shared programming, including camping (77 West Ohio campers attended an East Ohio camp in 2023), no other changes should be expected because two conferences may share a bishop.

Q: If we are going to be yoked with East Ohio and they have a big endowment for camps, can those resources benefit West Ohio Camps?

A: West Ohio is responsible for this situation and West Ohio will have to resolve it. Other than collaboration on shared programming, including camping (77 West Ohio campers attended an East Ohio camp in 2023), no other changes should be expected because two conferences may share a bishop

Q: Were area attractions considered when identifying which camp to sell?

A: Many things were considered including area attractions and competition. Accessibility was a key consideration. On that front, Camp Wesley, including the lake, is more accessible to all people and ages than Camp Otterbein. Finally, attendance was a consideration with Wesley attracting more campers in recent years than Camp Widewater or Camp Otterbein.

Q: Will there be a residential camping and retreat option in 2024?

A: Yes, any comprehensive Children, Youth and Young Adult ministry plan will include outdoor experiences, including residential camping.

Q: Regarding the priorities in the strategic plan, aren't the ways we develop future clergy in the CYAA/camps and retreats programming rather than keeping the Office of Ministry at the same level of support?

A: The three emerging priorities of the strategic plan are filling the ministry pipeline; children, youth and young adult ministry, and discipleship. They are not in priority order, nor do they stand alone. A sound CYAA strategy will inspire some to heed God's call to ministry.

- Q: Can districts make a children, youth, and young adult budget like the \$200k conference one?
- A: A district may choose to prioritize local church grants to churches seeking to enhance ministries to children, youth, and young adults.
- Q: Is there a broader effort to build CYYA as churches age?
- A: Yes, there is a full plan underway for developing a comprehensive strategy and there will be a progress report at the Annual Conference. The expectation is that the results of the planning effort will be presented to the June 2024 Annual Conference. It is likely the resulting plan will make clear the critical roles local churches must play in any Children, Youth, and Young Adult comprehensive plan. An overarching plan can assist and equip local churches; it cannot replace them.
- Q: Will changes to charitable contributions rules help or hurt a future capital campaign?
- A: There are donors motivated by taxes. But with the raised exemption level, many who will not receive a deduction still make donations. The Cramer feasibility study indicated a broad passion for ministry with children, youth, and young adults. The comprehensive plan for this ministry must ignite this passion so larger donors are motivated to give regardless of prevailing tax rules. For that to happen, the case for support needs to be improved.
- Q: Are there other camps in the state of Ohio we can rent, from other camp facilities?
- A: Yes. The Ohio Council of Churches has commenced work on this with other denominations that are navigating the same challenges as West Ohio. Last year, 77 campers from West Ohio attended an East Ohio camp, which demonstrates some demand for the outdoor experience whether it is at a West Ohio camp or not.
- Q: Could we sell all 3 camps and use the funds to rent others?
- A: Yes, that is a possibility.
- Q: Will trustees establish a specific account for the sales proceeds?
- A: Yes. Proceeds will be restricted in either a new fund or the existing camps and retreats fund. In either case, they would be invested so they can grow over time.
- Q: How do we know that monies will be invested in Camp Wesley?
- A: The motion obligates the Trustees to restrict proceeds as written, to camps and retreat ministries and children, youth, and young adult ministries.
- Q: How do we know where 1800 Children and Youth were engaged this past summer? Would the Freedom Schools and VBS have existed without the camp staff visiting?
- A: 1,975 children, youth, young adults, families, and community leaders were engaged in summer programming that summer camp staff were a part of. 1,975 is the sum of program participants, local church leadership and those involved in listening sessions across 32 unique events in all six districts. While some or even most programming may have happened without summer camp staff engaged, feedback suggests all parties benefited: local church leaders appreciated the additional leadership support and summer staff brought new perspectives.
- Q: Were there experts involved in determining the site to be retained?
- A: The task force relied on professional information from real estate experts experienced with camps on property valuations and for reserve studies. The group also relied on research and

information from the United Methodist Camp and Retreat Association. Members included a cross-section of conference leaders, some who had deep knowledge of camping in general and West Ohio's camps specifically.

Q: What were the key considerations when deciding on retaining Camp Wesley?

A: The Isiah group used a best practice matrix from Kaleidoscope Inc., a team of professional consultants and planners who know and are passionate about camps, retreat centers and outdoor centers. Camp Wesley's topography is more suited to multi-generational use than the hilly nature of Camp Otterbein. Regarding residential camping experience, Camp Wesley has more housing capacity than Otterbein or Widewater. Camp Wesley is more centrally located in the conference. Historically, Camp Wesley has seen more missional usage within West Ohio and Camp Wesley's physical infrastructure is closer to its end of life than the other two camps, which means new investment is more cost effective. The fact that the Hocking Hills region is a tourist destination was not a consideration.

Q: Who oversees the vision/strategy for ministry with children, youth, and young adults?

A: Because ministry with children, youth and young adults is part of the emerging strategic plan and the Connectional Table is responsible for overseeing the strategic plan, the Connectional Table is the highest-level governance body with accountability to ministry children, youth, and young adults. The Transformative Discipleship Team is accountable to the Annual Conference for all programming conducted by Connectional Ministries. Connectional Ministries is led by the Director of Connectional Ministries, Karen Cook.

Q: Do we want our camps just for children, youth and young adults or do we want it for retreat settings for adults as well? Do we want the same camp for both populations?

A: The camp that best serves West Ohio's future needs will be ideal not only for children and youth but young adults and families too. Whether it is an adult retreat destination depends on whether we have the financial resources to invest in the kind of capital improvements that constituency will demand.

### **Delegate voting:**

Q: Was the voter guide emailed recently?

A: Members received an email with a link to the Voter Guide and Book of Reports, which can be found [HERE](#).

Q: Can clergy vote for lay nominees?

A: No, only clergy can vote for clergy delegates; only lay can vote for lay delegates.

Q: Are any of the nominated delegates members of disaffiliating churches?

A: No. All delegates who have put their names forward are with churches that are continuing and not disaffiliating.

Q: Who is eligible to vote for delegates?

A: All annual conference members who are members of a West Ohio UMC may vote for delegates. Members of disaffiliating churches are members of the UMC until October 31 and therefore eligible to vote.