

Report to the Synod of 2018

From: Laurel Ridge Camp, Conference and Retreat Center

Mission, Purpose and Values

The mission statement for Laurel Ridge is *'Laurel Ridge is a mountain place set apart for forming disciples of Jesus Christ who live and learn in community to serve the world.'* As we are nestled in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Laurel Ridge is uniquely situated to offer summer camps, mission camps, year-round programming and rental facilities to communities of faith, non-profit organizations, businesses and individuals since its establishment in 1960. We live out our Mission Statement through two key focus areas:

Restoring faith through service: We are dedicated to you during your visit. We strive to meet every request with exacting attention to detail by providing you or your group with high quality environmentally friendly facilities, healthy meals, effortless set up and support of your event.

Working in harmony with God's creation so you can connect with Him: Situated on nearly 700 acres of beautiful mountain top wilderness, your spirits will soar as you sit in front of a crackling fire enjoying the aroma of a cup of fresh gourmet coffee. You'll feel God's presence as a gentle breeze and the sun softly caress your cheek. Laurel Ridge Facilities are unmatched in allowing you to explore your inner self, connect with God, reconnect with others and leave with a feeling of purpose.

Responsibilities

There were not any specific assignments to Laurel Ridge during the 2014 Synod. However, Laurel Ridge understands its critical role in the spiritual development of the church and has continued its program growth and financial development as outlined in the 2010 Synod. Laurel Ridge also continues to adapt its organizational structure to help the Board of Directors to continue to move forward in its role as a governing body. The staff continue to adapt their roles and responsibilities to more realistically meet the needs of the church, stewardship of its natural and financial resources and remain relevant in its role in serving the spiritual needs of its constituents and guests.

Summary of Activities

Many significant activities and physical improvements have continued, begun, or been completed during this reporting period. They include:

- Growth of the 'Friends Forever Annual Appeal' to address operational needs, endowment funding, and maintenance reserves for long term financial viability.
- New paint and carpet in the Salem Wing in Higgins Lodge due to water damage from break in fire line during January 2017 freeze.

- Revamping of our Mission Camp programming (Eco-Action! Camp, now Eco-Mission Camp and our 4 Mission Camps are structured and staffed similarly to Summer Camp with Dean's and volunteer counselors.
- A New roof on Bahnson Assembly Hall at Summer Camp completes converting all Summer Camp roofs from flat to pitched through the efforts of many volunteer, but in particular Karl Stimpson, the New Philadelphia Moravian Church Men's Fellowship and a gift from the George Andreve Fund.
- Continued improvements and upgrades to Summer Camp with the help of churches and volunteers through the 'Adopt-a-Cabin' program.
- Completion of unresolved concerns with Salem Wing addition to Higgins Lodge.
- All Laurel Ridge buildings upgraded with fiber optic connectivity ability for future needs.
- Staffing and organizational restructuring. All of our existing management team, except Office Manager Teresa Cude, are new to Laurel Ridge since the 2014 Synod.
- Refinement of the structure of the Laurel Ridge Board and its responsibilities.
- Continued membership in the American Camp Association.
- New membership in the Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association.
- Kubota tractor designated for our garden with many attachments through a donation from Sam and Julia Simmons
- New enclosed all-weather Kubota tractor made possible through the hard work and gifts from New Philadelphia Moravian Men's Fellowship, Home Moravian Church, Friedberg Moravian Church and several individual donors along with the George Andreve Fund
- Repeat occurrence of break in fire line in January of 2018 in the Salem Wing Guest Rooms, stairwells and hallways. Along with wind and snow damage to the dining room in Higgins Lodge causing complete removal of walls, ceilings and insulation.

Future Direction and Opportunities

It is the goal of the Laurel Ridge Staff and Board to provide the best stewardship possible of this ministry that has been entrusted to us. We will focus on our future direction in many ways including:

- Continue nurturing and developing our strong volunteer support.
- Regular review for relevancy of existing programs and events.
- Ongoing consideration of needs for our constituents and guests.
- Continue striving for operational efficiency.
- Expand our programs focused on environmental stewardship and education.
- Grow our youth camps to maximum capacity for maximum impact!
- Continue our goals of financial self-sufficiency and debt retirement.
- Responsibly maintain our existing buildings and equipment while actively seeking improvements that will help us maintain and grow our mission.
- Continue educating and building relationships within our churches that will clarify our abilities to be an expansion of their ministries.

Our future opportunities and challenges ahead include:

- How Laurel Ridge will address the decline in Moravian membership to remain a viable ministry to the Moravian denomination through outreach to other denominations.
- Maintaining a focus on Moravian heritage and identity while reaching out to other groups and denominations visiting Laurel Ridge.
- The challenge of Laurel Ridge becoming financially independent as annual provincial support declines dramatically.
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Summary

The theme of the 2018 Synod, “Living the Essentials with Courage for the Future,” is the core of how we operate at Laurel Ridge. Jeremiah 29:11 assures us that there is a plan for the future. Based on the expressed heritage and beliefs of the Moravian Church, our belief at Laurel Ridge is that we never stray from the essential reality that **God creates; God redeems; God blesses. And we will respond in faith, in love and in hope.**¹ If we truly believe God’s grace is available to everyone and He is the only source of sanctification, our responsibility is to reach out in love and welcome all who visit Laurel Ridge, no matter their denomination. Laurel Ridge will maintain a hope for a brighter future for the world and will remain steadfast in playing our part in remaining a mountain place set apart for making disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Mission of Laurel Ridge will not change, however, our methods to reach the youth and adults of the 21st century must change. Although, when the methodology to engage visitors changes, we do not automatically lose the essence of what Laurel Ridge has always been and will continue to be...a mountain place set apart for forming disciplines of Jesus Christ. God has truly blessed the ministry of Laurel Ridge for nearly 60 years and through God’s divine plan and the many volunteers and groups who support Laurel Ridge, we will continue to impact the lives of those who visit for generations to come.

Submitted by Tres Fordham, Director, Laurel Ridge

¹ “In Essentials, Unity: Understanding the essential things,” *Moravian Church in North America*, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.moravian.org/uncategorized/in-essentials-unity-understanding-the-essential-things/>.