

THE BOARD OF CAMPS AND RETREAT MINISTRIES

This is a time of second birth for the ministry of Camps and Retreats – and what a year it has been! The board and staff continue the ministry of “Serving all People for Christian Birth, Growth and Renewal.” The Board of Camps and Retreat Ministries oversees the ministry of Asbury Hills Camp & Retreat Center in the mountains of South Carolina above Greenville and the ministry of Sewee Coastal Retreat Center on the Intracoastal Waterway just up the coast from Charleston. Both of these ministries are experiencing a time of renewal.

At Asbury Hills we have been in full construction since November 2008 to remodel most of our existing year round buildings and replace our youth cabins. Two lodges, Batson and Creekside, have been remodeled to host 30 adults in hotel-style bedrooms, each with private baths and beds for 1-3 people. The Dining Hall has been remodeled to update all finishes, bathrooms and furnishings. Rice Lodge for youth has been remodeled to accommodate 60 youth in bunk beds, expanded bathrooms and an expanded meeting room. The transformation of these buildings is remarkable. These facilities opened in the spring of 2009.

The youth cabins that have served Asbury Hills since its founding have been replaced with new cabins that each sleep 16 people with bathrooms and showers in the cabin. We have added heat and air conditioning (for those really hot nights in the mountains) so these cabins are available for year round retreat use. Asbury Hills can now host youth groups up to 250 people. The cabins will be ready for summer 2009.

With all these new and renewed facilities we are expecting many more campers this summer and expanded retreat groups from local churches throughout the year. You will be very proud of what United Methodists have to offer at Asbury Hills!

The next steps at Asbury Hills include expanding the recreation areas, worship areas and meeting areas for larger gatherings. We are counting on the generosity of United Methodists across South Carolina to help us live into these next steps.

After pausing the operations at Sewee Coastal Retreat Center in December 2007, the board has been prayerfully working to seek the vision for this property. In the fall of 2008 the board completed a new master plan for the site to build a 50 room, full service adult retreat center for groups for the purpose of spiritual renewal. The natural beauty of the coast and the water serves as a call to reflection and renewal in our faith. The vision also includes every group having access via boat to the water and access to all the culture of the Charleston and coastal area. This plan includes new rooms for lodging, dining, meeting and worship located overlooking the waterway. The next step is a FEASIBILITY STUDY to determine if there is energy for this vision of the property. Will adult groups from churches wish to come for retreat? Can we operate a vital and viable retreat center at this location? Is capital funding for building this facility available? The board will spend 6-8 months (until fall 2009) in this feasibility study before determining the next steps. It is our great desire to see this vision fulfilled to serve the churches in South Carolina and the surrounding region!

In the fall of 2008, the ministry brought on a full time Director of Development to continue the improvement and addition of facilities and the strengthening of the viability of the ministry. Judy Outlaw, a long time South Carolina United Methodist with an extensive history of development efforts in not-for-profit work, has joined the staff. She will be leading the feasibility study, scholarship campaign efforts for summer camp, and many other development efforts on behalf of Asbury Hills and Sewee.

For more information, pictures of new facilities at Asbury Hills, and the master plan for Sewee, see our website www.sccampsandretreats.org. Thank-you for your support as we seek to continue to serve the ministry of United Methodist Churches in South Carolina!

*Joe Clark, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Jody Oates, Executive Director*