

CAZADERO FINANCIAL WORK GROUP REPORT

For the past 75 years Camp Cazadero has been a place where youth and congregations from throughout California come together to experience hospitality, community and spiritual growth in and through a connection to nature. We know future youth and people of all ages will continue to need this inclusive place where they can unplug, be accepted for their authentic selves, and grow with one another into the just and compassionate leaders our world needs.

As members of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ, we are motivated by our progressive and prophetic Christian faith. We have experienced Camp Cazadero as a place of spiritual encounter with natural beauty and human community in all our diversity.

We acknowledge the challenges the Conference, the Conference Council, and the Conference Staff are facing in deliberating the future of Cazadero. We know that identifying a path forward is urgent. The challenges of maintaining a facility as large as Cazadero have existed in the Conference for many decades. COVID and the crumbling relationship with UCCR brought this challenge to the forefront. We do understand that Cazadero is only one aspect of the outdoor ministry program and the Conference responsibilities. While many of us are passionate about our experience of this place as sacred, we have been committed to exploring all of our options in order to put forth the best possible solution for all involved.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

- that the Conference Council impress upon NCNC members the reality of our financial responsibility with regard to the Cazadero property and pursue with urgency ways to fund dormancy costs for Camp Cazadero while its decisions for Caz's future unfold;
- that, during this period of dormancy, the Conference adopt concurrent strategies of (a) allowing a group to raise the necessary funds to hire a professional consultant to develop a financially viable plan for Camp Cazadero as a collection of ministries, and (b) preparing and marketing the property for sale;
- that, if a financially viable plan for Camp Cazadero emerges from this consultation, then the Conference Council inform Conference members of the contours of that plan, entertain proposals that accord with that plan, and support implementing those proposals as a preferred way forward, rather than sale.

Summary of Our Work

We have met with the outside experts listed below, all of whom suggest to us that a financially viable and sustainable business plan for the property at Camp Cazadero is a complex project that will take time, intentionality and expertise to develop, and also a very valuable one. These experts include:

Landis Graden (DCG Consulting)
Larry McCulloch (Former Exec Dir La Foret)
Elizabeth Schilling (non-profit expertise)
Joe Silva (Real Estate expertise)
Wade Zick (Camp Development - Pilgrim Firs, WA)
Justin Whittaker, (Dir White Memorial Camp and Retreat Center, Council Grove, KS)
Jody Oates, (Kaleidoscope Consulting - attending to our next meeting)

As we have attempted to address the work we were tasked with by Conference Council and considered how Camp Cazadero might best serve the mission of the NCNC-UCC, based on the information provided by our outside experts, our own research and budgeting, and our deliberations as a team, we have identified two main options:

- 1 Develop Camp Cazadero into a financially viable organization consisting of a collection of ministries
- 2 Sell the property

Regardless of the path we choose, we do not believe the NCNC will be able to extricate from the financial burdens of the property in any kind of immediate way or without spending time and resources.

- 1 *Considerations for Developing a Financially Viable Collection of Ministries: 501c3 or Separate Organization*

We explored two options for organizing the camp as a collection of sustainable ministries, the first being a separate non-profit organization (501c3), and the second option to develop a separate entity operating under the auspices of the Conference/Council and maintaining enough autonomy to run the camp efficiently. We believe creating a separate non-profit organization would give us the best chance at success.

In order to develop a plan for keeping Camp Cazadero to support a collection of ministries for our Conference, it is critical to develop an organization with a clear vision and strong (paid) leadership to build and support the mission. Our research suggests it will take much longer to develop a financially viable business plan for a sustainable collection of Ministries at Camp Cazadero than we have been given and that professional assistance is required. There are a number of questions that a group of volunteers without particular expertise is just not able to address:

- What is the best use of the land given its location?
- How can we turn the remote location into an advantage?
- What are realistic strategic goals?

What is the mission and vision of this collection of ministries that can be sustained?
What is a business model that will move Camp Cazadero toward financial independence?
Can we generate enough revenue?
What is the market research that supports that model?
What are the long-term capital needs for that model?
What does the organization look like? (non-profit? Collection of ministries?)
Who has responsibility? authority?
What would our fee structure look like?
What would fundraising look like?
What is the organization's relationship to the Conference?
Who would we be competing with for business?
How would we identify future clients?
What is our marketing strategy?
What grants might be available to us?

To do this work properly, our research has indicated that we would likely need a 3-year run-up time and professional assistance to conduct market studies, create a viable business model, identify clients, and prepare camp property for new uses. Obviously, this requires commitment and faith on the part of the Conference to support it as a ministry.

Regardless of whether a 501c3 is established or the Conference charges a separate entity under the Conference/Council, there will be a need for seed money to support this time of preparation, staffing, property maintenance and upgrades. Our team has identified possible sources of this seed money in the Sonoma Land Trust agreement, a partial sale of property, a capital campaign, alumni and large donor giving, sustainable logging, and financial support from the Conference. Each of these funding options will take time to build capital. Professional guidance would also help in creating a fundraising plan that addresses the complexities of the Conference's needs and overlapping pools of donors, as well as discerning what sources of income leave us in the best position to succeed.

Without an initial infusion of funds from the Conference or some other source, we would not be able to hire the professional leadership needed for such a concept to succeed. Lack of clear leadership could lead to failure of this organization and return of the property to NCNC in, potentially, worse condition and thus an even greater long-term burden.

The team has already received a number of proposals that could be developed into viable 501c3s: Dreaming Proposal (Sharon Fennema and Lacey Hunter) as well as outdoor education possibilities (Dawson Bell and Emily Morgan), and music camps. We believe utilizing professional guidance from a consultant to develop a business plan and organizational model would then put the Conference in the best position to entertain and assess proposals that accord with that plan, and choose a path forward that would be for the flourishing of the Conference as well as Camp Caz.

2 *Considerations for Selling the Property*

Our experts and research concur that Camp Caz would be a challenging property to sell as it is in a recently threatened fire-zone and does not have any existing residential zoning. Comparable properties in Northern California have taken from 5-10 years to sell. Additionally, we will need to consider the deferred maintenance on the property which is substantial, and its impact on the property's marketability.

If we were to choose the option of selling the property, the Conference would need to budget for a potential of 5-10 years of dormancy costs including insurance and basic oversight to assure the asset does not create risks that could result in liability. Our budget team estimates that just basic subsistence without any significant maintenance would cost \$31,800/yr. There will also be a significant investment of time working with those marketing the property and likely management of improvements needed to make the property attractive for sale.

Final Thoughts

This team believes that the best way for Camp Cazadero to serve the mission of the NCNC-UCC is to move forward with developing Camp Cazadero into a financially viable organization consisting of a collection of ministries, according to the timeline stated above. In order to do that, the Conference would need to engage professional guidance to create a viable business plan and organizational model, as well as fundraising and marketing strategies. We believe the Conference could adopt a three-phase strategy for supporting the future of Camp Cazadero: Survive → Revive → Thrive.

- Survive: sustaining dormancy costs and engaging professional guidance so that we might responsibly consider our options.
- Revive: adopt recommendations from professional consultant and begin to move from dormancy to relaunch guided by market research and feasibility plan and with sound fundraising led by new ministries staff/executive director and team.
- Thrive: launch a collection of sustainable ministries that serve and expand the mission of NCNC-UCC and connect to new audiences and needs.

There is more ministry that can be done at Camp Cazadero and a more promising future for its development and use than its sale. We remain hopeful that the Conference will see the value of investing in Cazadero as an opportunity for continued unique ministries to contribute to our troubled world. As a group, we believe in the transformational power of camp and that the NCNC-UCC should strive to be at the forefront of education around understanding how we can be better stewards of our natural world and how we can strengthen community and connection for the disenfranchised. Cazadero can serve as the vehicle through which we deliver important spiritual teachings and inspire leaders to contribute to a better world.