

## A Time To Replenish



I will satisfy the weary, and all who are faint I will replenish. Jeremiah 31:25

pandemic. Thank you, Shana, for filing a very detailed application and following up a year later to get the entire amount forgiven. A bequest that came late in 2020 also lifted both the Conference and DuBois Center finances. We did not need to make an extraordinary withdrawal from our investments in 2020. As of this writing, we don't anticipate needing an extraordinary withdrawal in 2021 either.

This gives us some unexpected latitude, and it couldn't come at a better time. Last year, I wrote we were in a time that required grace and persistence while we were waiting to discover where Illinois South might go next. I believe that discovery is now and it's pointing us to DuBois Center.

With the addition of Hayley Elliott as our Acting Director of Outdoor Ministries in April, camp staff pulled off something remarkable- a successful camp season under the shadow of Covid-19. Kids and families returned to camp, the lake filled with laughter, the horses met new friends, and our camp came to life again.

The fallow year in 2020 pointed out some repairs we need to address. This summer really showed us the need for expanded camper capacity, too. In 2021, we saw rekindled interest from outside groups wanting to use our facilities, even those that have been off our calendar for some time. As other camps close, it appears DuBois is coming into sharper focus for people, and particularly since we offer horseback riding. In 2022, DuBois Center will turn 60 years old. Think of the thousands of campers and staff that have made memories there during the past six decades.

After consulting with the Property Committee, it's clear we need some improvements. We need to repair some areas to maintain our property investment and our functionality. We need to finish what we've started by bringing Deer Run back to full use, particularly for Boy Scout and Girl Scout tent camping groups. We also need to expand our camper capacity so we can house more campers and retreat goers per event. For these reasons, at Annual Meeting 2021 we will introduce DuBois 6.0, a capital campaign aimed at jump starting us for the next 60 years. More details will be shared at Annual Meeting about the specific projects included in this campaign, along with how we can meet these financial goals in a fairly short time frame.

Even with a deficit budget, even during a pandemic, we still need to be doing the business of the church. Burying talents in the ground isn't the best way to live into that. DuBois Center is our common place for faith formation and for coming together as a Conference. It is our single greatest financial asset, and it allows us to reach people beyond the UCC.

## 2021 Moderator's Report

In what seems an unending time of Covid, we all must push on. Conference Council and the Executive Committee have diligently worked at staying focused on what the new normal might be, and when it might get here. We have approved repairs and improvements at DuBois Center during recent staff changes, sent out Covid Updates as information became available, and with the recommendation of the Finance Ministry Team made changes to our investments, all in preparation for a time when this pandemic is truly contained.

I'm happy to share that the PPP Loan we needed last year was entirely forgiven, and we owe nothing on it because we kept all our staff employed during the early days of the

There have been multiple quiet rumblings in recent years about DuBois. I know you've all heard them, just as I have. Spinning off the camp as a separate legal entity is an option I've heard frequently. In my opinion, spinning off the camp to die a slow public death throws away our decades of investment and leaves us with no place to send our own youth to camp. DuBois Center isn't "them", it's "us". We, the Conference, fund this portion of our mission and outreach. Closing the funding door to the camp would quickly drain DuBois-specific funds. It would be cutting off our nose to spite our face in so many ways.

The other possibility often heard is that we should just close the camp, and it frequently includes something about the horses costing too much, too. First, horses are an incredible draw for a camp, and they bring us campers. Our dedicated horse volunteers and the stable they care for are an asset, not a liability. Second, closing and selling the camp outright might gain some dollars in the short term, but they would eventually dwindle away, leaving us with no further potential income stream.

Right now, we have no promises, but we do have tremendous potential. My grandmother used to wear a bracelet with a tiny silver and glass charm that contained a mustard seed inside. It was her constant reminder to rely on faith. I feel this is that moment where we remember faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains.

I think DuBois is our best example of the Conference being the church- connecting to people both within and beyond our metaphorical walls, welcoming all to the table. That simple message still has meaning. Those few wooded acres provide a place away from screens to connect to our Creator and with each other. And, we steward a piece of the environment that can't be replaced either. I think that is all too valuable for us to lose.

DuBois 6.0 is an investment in our camp, and it is an option with potential to move us forward. Come listen at Annual Meeting to DuBois 6.0 and see if you agree.

Submitted by

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