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## Southeast Gateway Area Of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America

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Dear SEGA friends and colleagues,

During the August 8 meeting at Abbey Road Christian Church in Cape Girardeau, the SEGA Board made the tough, but unanimous decision for Orchard Crest Camp to remain closed during 2010. As you will recall, Orchard Crest sustained such significant damage during a severe storm on May 8 that we had to move our 2009 summer camps to other campgrounds. Our JYF, Chi Rho, and CYF camps were held at Rickman Center in Jefferson City, and our MAD camp took place at the UCC Camp Mo-Val in Union, Missouri.

The Board's decision to keep Orchard Crest closed during 2010 came while they were working on the 2010 and 2011 Area budget proposals, which are to be presented to our Area Assembly on September 19. As it is very important to the Board to present a balanced budget, Orchard Crest financial data (as well as utilization data) from the last several years was considered. It was determined that opening Orchard Crest for 2010 would result in replicating the \$10,000 deficit of 2008. Several additional factors also went into the Board's decision:

- Camp dates must be set in December in order to have sufficient planning time. Unfortunately, our insurance adjustor has not yet completed his work. With the extent of damage, the options for repair, and the cost of the repair still largely unknown, it is impossible to guarantee summer readiness by December. After the May 8 storm, we had to change our previously announced dates in order to secure a campground. As a result of this late date change, 24 campers had to cancel. We don't want to run that risk again.
- The number of SEGA campers at Orchard Crest has continued to decline. Congregational surveys indicate that most of our SEGA congregations have fewer young people than they've ever had. The surveys further express that many of their youth are too busy to attend church camp.

- We've been unsuccessful at attracting outside groups to Orchard Crest. This may be due to the fact that there are many other options for camping in the Fredericktown area, and that our buildings need to be updated.
- Our Mid-America Region is in a serious conversation about restructure, and there appears to be much interest in moving to a Region-wide outdoor ministries program. At this point, we don't know what that would mean for Orchard Crest.

At this time, **no decisions have been made about Orchard Crest for 2011.**

We do not yet have enough information to make a responsible decision. In fact, during our September 19 Area Assembly, the Board will be asking the Assembly to empower the 2010-2011 Board to make that decision after all the information is known.

In the meantime, camp manager Wendell Bellew and his family will continue to live in the manager's house. Wendell's job description and compensation will change so that he will only be providing security for the camp, a minimal amount of maintenance, and communication with the logging company as they continue the cleanup effort. As a result, Orchard Crest expenses will be reduced significantly.

Please be reassured that our camping program will continue during 2010. The SEGA Board and I are very committed to providing fun, meaningful, and safe church camp opportunities for all our young people. We'll begin exploring our campground options right away, and plan to announce our camping dates in December.

I ask for your prayers and your patience as we get things figured out. As always, don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Blessings,

Penny Ross-Corona

Area Minister

