

Thursday, June 18, 2009

Following the May 8 storm that hit Orchard Crest, camp manager Wendell Bellew and SEGA board property chair Jon Daniel interviewed several logging contractors about removing the large trees that were blown down. They recommended that we hire Dean Gipson, who is a local independent logging contractor. He's able to give us the best deal, and he's someone they know and trust. Several members of the Fredericktown Christian Church also know and trust him. It turns out that Dean Gipson's father was the logger who did some select cutting at Orchard Crest nearly fifty years ago, which was the most recent time it was done.

Area Minister Penny Ross-Corona signed the contract on June 16, and Dean will be able to start work in 3 – 4 weeks. He will remove the blown down timber (including the trees on top of the buildings). We have also asked him to harvest some select timber down to a diameter of 18 inches. We will be paid 30% on storm damaged logs and 50% on grade logs after hauling.

"It's my understanding that we should have been doing some select cutting at Orchard Crest all along," said Penny Ross-Corona. "It's good stewardship and part of responsible forestry practices. I learned from Wendell that the majority of our trees are black oaks, which start rotting from the inside out when they reach a certain size/age. If they are harvested before they rot, they can be sold and used. Removing them also makes room for the younger trees around them to grow. I am satisfied from my reading of the documents that we have from Mrs. Lydia Sandmeier, who gave the land, that our engaging in some select cutting does not at all violate our agreements." Wendell Bellew will be working along side of Dean Gipson, ensuring that all select cutting will be done in areas of the forest that will not detract from the beauty of the camp.

Once all the trees have been removed from on top of the buildings, our insurance adjustor will return to finish his work. Also, once Dean Gipson has completed his work in the cabin areas, we will be asking for volunteer teams to come in and finish some of the clean up work. In the meantime, please don't go down to Orchard Crest yet. It's still too dangerous.

Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Dear SEGA friends and colleagues,

Here is a link to a flyer with our revised summer camping schedule:

www.segadisciples.org/documents/new%20dates%20and%20locations%20flyer.pdf. As I shared with you earlier, we have made arrangements for our CYF, Chi Rho, and JYF camps to be held at Rickman Center in Jefferson City on June 23 – 27. We have now made arrangements for MAD camp to be held at Camp Mo-Val (a United Church of Christ Camp) at Union, Missouri and I-44 (about an hour outside of St. Louis). We are delighted that MAD camp will be able to keep their original dates (July 12 – 19). Both the Mission trip and the Float trip have been unaffected by the storm at Orchard Crest. As we had promised, the fees for all of this summer's events are not going to go up.

The campers who had already registered for CYF, Chi Rho, and JYF camps before the storm, have all been contacted about the change of dates and place. Those who are unable to go on the new dates are receiving full refunds. Today we will begin contacting all those who have registered for MAD camp to let them know of the change of place.

There is still room for more campers in all of our camps and float trip. In order to encourage more to sign up, we have extended the early bird fee to June 1. Please forward this flyer to your congregation.

Again, I apologize for any inconvenience that these changes have caused. Please know that we are doing our best to provide a meaningful, fun, and safe camp experience for all our young people.

Blessings,
Penny Ross-Corona
Area Minister

Monday, May 18, 2009

Dear SEGA friends and colleagues,

As you know, we are regretfully unable to hold our SEGA church camps at Orchard Crest Camp this summer, due to storm damage. At the same time, we are committed to still holding church camp, and we are committed to charging the same fees that we had previously advertized. Because we are booking camp grounds so late in the season, some of our previously announced dates have unfortunately had to change. This is what we have been able to arrange:

JYF Camp, Chi Rho Camp, and CYF Camp will all three be held at Rickman Center in Jefferson City on Tuesday June 23 at 10:00 a.m. through Saturday June 27 at 10:00 a.m. The directors and counselors will come in on Monday afternoon June 22 to finish getting ready for camp. While all three camps will share meals together, each camp will have its own schedule and meeting areas. Also, we will not mix the campers in the cabins.

We are still finalizing arrangements for MAD Camp. However, there is a good possibility that MAD Camp will be able to keep their original dates of July 12 – 18. I'm in conversation with another camp ground facility, because there is not space for MAD Camp at Rickman. Hopefully, all the arrangements will be firmed up in the next day or two. I'll let you know as soon as I know something.

I apologize for the inconvenience that this change has caused. I'm aware that some of our campers and counselors, who were planning to attend JYF, Chi Rho, or CYF, will not be able to make their calendar work for the new dates, and I know you are disappointed. This is something that couldn't be helped, but I am very sorry. Please know that the directors are contacting their counselors, and my office will be contacting all campers who have registered. If a camper cannot attend on the new dates, they will receive a full refund. Also, we are still accepting registrations for new campers, including MAD Camp. The SEGA Float Trip and the SEGA Mission Trip are not affected at all, because they don't involve Orchard Crest Camp.

Again, I apologize for the inconvenience that this change has caused. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be helpful to you.

Blessings,
Penny Ross-Corona
Area Minister

Thursday, May 14, 2009 11:39 am

Dear SEGA Friends and Colleagues,

As you know from my two previous emails, we are unable to hold summer camp at Orchard Crest this summer. I want to reassure you that we are working hard at finding a church camp ground that we can rent to hold our SEGA camps. I am currently in conversation with Rickman Center in Jefferson City and with Camp Mo-Val (a UCC campground) at Union, MO. Besides looking at date options, we are also looking carefully at pricing. It is our goal to charge the same registration fees that we have already advertized. Please know that we are also trying to keep the camps on the same dates that we have advertized. However, that may not be possible. Once the decision is made, we will contact all the campers who have already registered. If any of them need to cancel, they will receive a full refund.

At this point, no final decisions have been made. However, I am hopeful of making a decision and an announcement on Monday. Again, I apologize for any inconvenience this has caused. I will plan to let you know something on Monday.

Blessings,
Penny Ross-Corona

Thursday, May 14, 2009, 9:13 am

Dear SEGA friends and colleagues,

On Tuesday I went down to Orchard Crest Camp to look at the damage from the May 8 storm. Don Miller (from Community Christian Church in Manchester), who has a construction background, went with me. So did Doug Dischinger, our UCCIB insurance agent. Unfortunately, the insurance adjuster got tied up in Springfield (looking at storm damage) and won't be able to look at Orchard Crest until Friday. Wendell Bellew (our camp manager) and Jon Daniel (from the Fredericktown Christian Church) showed us the damage.

We were surprised at what we saw. There was less damage to the cabins than we had anticipated. It looked like only 2 or 3 have structural damage and will need to come down. The rest look like they can be repaired, once the fallen trees are removed. We'll know more when we hear from our insurance adjuster, but that's the good news.

The bad news has to do with the trees. Many trees are already down, and many more will be coming down as soon as the downed ones (which are supporting them) are cut away or as soon as we get a windy day. It's difficult to walk around in both the valley cabin and the hill cabin areas because of all the trees on the ground, and we were unable to make it up to peace park at all. In addition, there are trees hanging on power lines and power lines on the ground. Some of the trees are broken, but many of them came out by the roots. A lot of the ground is solid rock, so the roots don't go very deep. With all the rain they've had, the ground was saturated, and the straight line winds (80 to 120 mph) pulled the trees right out of the ground. Our insurance will pay for removal of trees that are on our buildings, but not for removal of trees that didn't fall on buildings. To give you an idea of the massive number of downed trees, the volunteer workers from the Fredericktown Christian Church (who were at the camp during the storm) had to cut through 152 trees that had fallen across the road between the camp and hwy J in order to leave. It took them six hours.

All that is to say that the cleanup will be massive, and it will be dangerous. Wendell Bellew (our camp manager) used to be a "logger" and knows how to take down the trees. We are going to be hiring some other professional loggers to assist him, but he anticipates that it will take several months to get the camp cleared. He's trying to work as quickly as possible before the trees rot, so he can sell them as lumber. After the trees are removed, we'll be able to deal with

the cabins. Also, after the trees and downed power lines are removed, we'll be asking for volunteers from SEGA congregations to help with remaining cleanup. In the meantime, PLEASE DON'T GO DOWN TO THE CAMP. IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!

Needless to say, Orchard Crest will not be ready for us to hold church camp there this summer. However, please know that we are committed to having camp at a different location with the same camp registration fees that we have advertised. Unfortunately, because we are booking campgrounds this late, some of the dates will probably have to change. However, any campers who are unable to go because of the changes will receive a full refund.

I apologize for any inconvenience that these changes may cause. Please know that we are doing our best to provide a safe and meaningful summer camping experience for our young people. I'll be in touch.

Blessings,

Penny Ross-Corona

Tuesday, May 12, 2009, 8:34 am

Penny is on her way down to Orchard Crest to survey and photograph the damage. With her are Community Christian Church's Don Miller and SEGA's insurance agent Doug Dischinger.

Monday, May 11, 2009, 12:28 pm

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Many of you have already heard that Orchard Crest Camp sustained severe storm damage on Friday afternoon, May 8. At the time of the storm, about a dozen volunteers from the Fredericktown Christian Church were working at the camp, putting new linoleum in the cabin bathrooms. They took cover in the dining hall during the storm, and thankfully none of them were hurt. When the storm was over, they discovered quite a few of our huge, beautiful trees had been blown down, many of them landing on our cabins. In fact, Jon Daniel (who called me) thought that all the cabins, except one or two on the hill, have trees on top of them. Jon also said that the conference center on the hill has a tree on it. The dining hall, craft barn, nurse's cabin, valley conference center, pool and shower house are all okay. Trees were down on the road, and it took the volunteers six hours to clear the road, so they could leave the camp Friday night. And they all did get out safely. Wendell Bellew's house has only a slight amount of damage, and he and his family are able to still live in it. Right now there is no electricity at the camp. Trees are wrapped around power lines, and some power lines are on the ground. Many trees were weakened during the storm and are still falling.

PLEASE DO NOT GO DOWN TO THE CAMP. It is dangerous, and we don't want anyone to get hurt. We have canceled Primetimers for this coming Wednesday, May 13. We have canceled the workday that was scheduled for Saturday, May 16. Some initial clearing and electrical work must be done before we can safely get volunteers in to do clean up work. We have also canceled Family Camp, which was scheduled for May 23-25.

I am planning a trip down to the camp tomorrow (May 12) with our insurance adjuster and will bring back word from our insurance company, as well as some photos to share with you. We will also determine whether the camp can be repaired in time for our summer church camping

program. If it can't, I will find an alternate camp site for us to hold this summer's camps. However, let's take one step at a time.

I'll be in touch.

Blessings,
Penny Ross-Corona