

Dear Members of the Southeast Gateway Area Church Community,

Greetings in Christ who makes us one in faith and ministry!

As Moderator of the Southeast Gateway Area of the Christian Church in Mid-America, I want to share with you the prayerful and difficult action of our Area Board. This past Saturday, August 7, the Board met at Hawk Point, Missouri where we continued in our over year-long process of study and decision-making about Orchard Crest Camp and the future of our outdoor ministry programs with children and youth.

This Saturday we made three vital decisions. The *first* was a vote for SEGA to divest of Orchard Crest; meaning that due to the condition of the camp, the trends in Area children and youth attending the camp, and the financial challenges of our time, we could no longer invest in the camp property. The vote was 19 – 4 in favor of divestiture. The *second* was a “No” vote, 17–5 with one abstention, to a request by five congregations that SEGA deed a part of the Orchard Crest property to them. The *third* was a unanimous vote to accept the *SEGA Nurture Division Recommendation for the Future of our Outdoor Ministry Programs with Children and Youth*. (see attached).

This vote affirmed the three-part proposal that:

1. We continue in our efforts to partner with the other areas of the Mid-America Region to offer youth ministry and outdoor ministry experiences for our young people.
2. The Orchard Crest Camp property be sold.
3. The proceeds be used to set up an endowment to support outdoor ministry programs in the form of camp scholarships and program costs.

In the many months leading to this decision we have discussed, prayed, told stories, and wrestled with the dreams and possibilities before us. We have met in congregations throughout the Area to talk and listen. We have shared ideas and suggestions among those who are committed to Christ’s ministry with children, youth, and adults in the outdoors.

Through it all, we have cried, expressed anger, disappointment and hope. No one was happy with the need to make this decision on Saturday. However, we made the decision with a sense of love for the Church, a profound hope in God’s leading, and a deep commitment to the future of our ministry with children and youth.

We have spoken often in these many months, about the dream of Mrs. Lydia Sandmeier who originally gave the property to the Missouri Association of Christian Churches. Since 1958, members of District 10 and then SEGA congregations have poured life and love into building, improving, and maintaining the camp. We and our children and our children’s children have come to know the love of God, the heart of Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of the Church at Orchard Crest. It is often said that the greatest act of love is letting go. We hold on to this truth as we let go of this particular land in order to continue to love children and youth into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ and with the broader community of Christ’s Church. We believe that through our commitment to remain one in Christ, and our covenant to provide life-changing outdoor ministry for children and youth, we will be faithful to Lydia’s dream. And most important, we will be faithful to the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

We will now work on two things: the process of getting ready to the sell the property and the planning of a SEGA-wide celebration of these years of faithful ministry at Orchard Crest. SEGA’s Administrative Division will begin working immediately. As we move forward, we will keep you informed at every step.

May the Peace of Christ hold us in faith and renew us in hope,

Jacquelyn Foster
Southeast Gateway Area Moderator