

Report to the Synod of 2022

From: Laurel Ridge Camp, Conference and Retreat Center on 60th Anniversary Capital Campaign and Celebration

Mission, Purpose and Values

The core mission of Laurel Ridge is “to form disciples to serve the world.” This is the same commission Jesus gave to the disciples in Matthew 26:19-20 and inherently given to all Christians. In 1960, a small group from the Winston Salem churches held their first camps at Laurel Ridge establishing a centralized location to continue the formation of disciples to serve our world.

Our purpose: “Restoring faith through service” and our values to “Working in harmony with God’s creation so you can connect with Him” are at the core of the reason for the 60th Anniversary Capital Campaign known as the Building Community Capital Campaign.

Volunteers and staff at Laurel Ridge have taken great care to steward our facilities in order to continue to serve children, families, and congregations of the Province. The growing usage of the Laurel Ridge facilities has allowed us to stabilize operations and strengthen our ministry. While a continued increase in facility usage is critical to our long-term ability to continue forming disciples of Jesus Christ, this increased usage of our facilities has also created a challenge to meet the needs of today’s guests. The Building Community Capital Campaign addresses our needs for today and for the foreseeable future.

Responsibilities

The specific assignment to Laurel Ridge during the 2018 Synod was Resolution #8 (Proposal 20) Laurel Ridge 60th Anniversary Capital Campaign, giving Laurel Ridge the authority to conduct up to a \$1.5 million campaign with a detailed report to the Synod of 2022 on the successes of the campaign and 60th Anniversary Celebration.

Since 1977 the Higgins Lodge facility (“Higgins”) at Laurel Ridge has served thousands of persons of all ages in the Moravian Church Southern Province as the primary year-round conference and retreat building. This capital campaign is critical to sustain the role Laurel Ridge plays in the spiritual development of the church as noted in both the 2002 & 2010 Synod’s approval of the original expansion of Higgins Lodge and subsequent capital campaign. However, due to unforeseen construction issues and expenditures during the expansion, and new health department requirements for the Summer Camp kitchen, spending of funds were prioritized to keeping Laurel Ridge Facilities open and meeting code requirements. The current capital updates allow Laurel Ridge to continue the vision of meeting the facility needs of the Province for spiritual development and financial stability as we transition from a financial liability to a financial asset.

Summary of Activities

Capital Campaign

- Began the solicitation phase of the capital campaign in the fall of 2020, reaching more than one third of our goal by the end of March 2022.
- As of March 2022, 95 donors have given or pledged to give \$681,462.
- Payments to the Province to reduce the \$750,000 debt began in the fall of 2021 and over \$125,000 in payments have been made as of March 2022.
- Currently making scheduled monthly payments to continue the reduction of our debt obligation to the province.
- Province has committed to paying off the mortgage on Higgins Lodge in conjunction with Laurel Ridge continuing our monthly payments.
- Prior to the beginning of the 2022 Synod, presentations have been made at Advent, Calvary, Friedberg, Friedland, Home, Kernersville, Konnoak Hills, Mountain Laurel Fellowship and Raleigh Moravian Churches, along with a presentation to the Moravian Ministries Association.
- As we move forward through the remainder of the campaign, we would seek the opportunity to visit and share at each Moravian Church in the Province, from Virginia to Florida.
- 100% of funds have been secured to provide the means for using renewable solar energy at both Higgins and Tise Lodges to reduce year-round energy costs, thereby reducing our operational costs.
- For a detailed brochure of the Building Community Capital Campaign click [Brochure](#)
- For a summary sheet of the Building Community Capital Campaign click [Summary](#)

60th Anniversary Celebration

- Over 350 gathered together on July 24, 2021
- Full slate of camp activities including canoeing, hiking, GIC, archery & fishing
- Music throughout the day from Moravian musicians ranging from traditional Moravian Chorales to contemporary songs.
- Food trucks and fellowship
- Speakers from each of the past 6 decades
- Participants created a timeline of key events in their life related to Laurel Ridge.
- Celebratory silent auction of all things Laurel Ridge
- 28 people participated in a golf outing at Reynolds Park Golf Course on October 9, 2021.

Future Direction and Opportunities

It is the goal of the Laurel Ridge Staff and Board to provide the best possible stewardship of Laurel Ridge making needed upgrades, paying off debt and building reserves through the 60th Anniversary (Building Community) Capital Campaign. A one year extension to the solicitation phase of the campaign will help to ensure we can:

- Continue nurturing and developing our strong volunteer support.
- Regular review for relevancy of existing programs and events.

- Ongoing consideration of needs for our constituents and guests.
- Continue striving for operational efficiency to be a viable financial asset to the Province..
- Expand our programs while keeping environmental stewardship and environmental education a priority.
- Grow our youth camps to maximum capacity for maximum impact!
- Continue our goals of financial self-sufficiency and debt retirement.
- Responsibly maintain our existing buildings and equipment while actively seeking improvements that will help us maintain and grow our mission.
- Continue educating and building relationships within our churches that will clarify our abilities to be an expansion of their ministries.

A successful campaign will strengthen Laurel Ridge’s ability to address:

- The role Laurel Ridge plays in helping to reverse the decline in Moravian membership to remain a viable ministry to the Moravian denomination while also meeting the spiritual needs of other denominations.
- Maintaining a focus on Moravian heritage and identity while reaching out to other groups and denominations visiting Laurel Ridge.
- Laurel Ridge remains financially independent and growing as a financial asset as provincial support is reduced.

Summary

The theme of the 2018 Synod, “Living the Essentials with Courage for the Future,” continues through the Building Community Capital Campaign as a successful campaign ensures there is a place for making disciples who go and serve the world for generations to come. At Laurel Ridge, we never stray from or shy away from the essential reality that God creates; God redeems; God blesses, so we can always respond in faith, in love and in hope.¹ If we truly believe God’s grace is available to everyone and He is the only source of sanctification, our responsibility is to reach out in love and welcome all who visit Laurel Ridge, no matter their denomination. In doing so, Laurel Ridge will maintain a hope for a brighter future for the world and will remain steadfast in playing our part in remaining a mountain place set apart for making disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Mission of Laurel Ridge will not change, however, the methods and facilities must adapt and grow to reach the youth and adults of the 21st century. Growth and change do not automatically cause the loss of the essence of Laurel Ridge. Laurel Ridge was created to be a mountain place set apart for forming disciplines of Jesus Christ and a successful Building Community Capital Campaign will enhance its abilities to do so for generations to come. God has truly blessed the ministry of Laurel Ridge for over 60 years and through the generosity of volunteers and groups who support Laurel Ridge, will continue to impact lives for generations to come.

Submitted by Tres Fordham, Director, Laurel Ridge

¹ “In Essentials, Unity: Understanding the essential things,” *Moravian Church in North America*, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.moravian.org/uncategorized/in-essentials-unity-understanding-the-essential-things/>.