

Dear Partners in Mission,

In February, our synod council, as well as the boards of the Mission Endowment Fund and Briarwood, held their regular meetings. At these meetings, we discussed many things, including the new vision and direction for Briarwood and the hiring of the director for the Briarwood Leadership Center.

From these conversations, I took away a great sense of hope in the commitment to Briarwood being shown by NT-NL in this new partnership. There was affirmation of the hard decisions made over the last year by key leaders at Briarwood and NT-NL. Additionally, there was still some confusion about the leadership model for Briarwood and how it was to be executed.

As a result, I felt it wise to communicate with you directly in the form of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that came out of these conversations with elected leadership.

- 1) Is the Director of the Briarwood Leadership Center (the “director”) replacing the program director or the executive director?

Answer: Neither. The executive director position was removed from the budget in 2019 in an attempt to get Briarwood to financial sustainability. The Leadership Center director position is a new position being funded in part by the allocation in the Briarwood budget for the program director and the remainder by an investment from NT-NL which will be noted in the 2019/2020 NT-NL budgets but will largely be covered by special gifts.

- 2) Then who is coordinating programs for youth and young adults?

Answer: The director oversees the operations of the entire ministry, including the operations director and program coordinators delegating daily supervision as appropriate. The program director’s responsibilities are now being handled by our two program coordinators (previously existing positions) Ms. Madi Williams and Ms. Sarah Weaver, who have been developed as leaders by our ministries at Briarwood. They will also be assisted by Mrs. Cathie Irons (Briarwood Board) and the Rev. Kris Totzke (NT-NL Bishop’s Associate), both of whom have experience and expertise in camping ministry. Click here to apply to be summer staff at Briarwood. www.briarwoodretreat.org/copy-of-camp-counselors

- 3) What then does the director of the Briarwood Leadership Center do?

Answer: The director is responsible for the entire supervision of the ministry at Briarwood, including staff, program, and operations. This role was created from the visioning work of the Leadership Development task force that met from 2014-2018. This team cast a vision for a position dedicated to developing Briarwood further as a leadership development center for all ages, connected to ecclesial, educational, and secular leadership development in our communities. The director is responsible for this and for all the functions of Briarwood as a retreat center and camp. Additionally, the director will relate to particular NT-NL teams related to leadership development.

4) Is Briarwood financially sustainable?

Answer: Thanks to the land sale, continued operations through this transition time, the investment from the NT-NL budget, and continued support from NT-NL congregations and individuals, Briarwood is in its best financial position in history. It has no outside creditors, holds cash on hand for operations and investment, and a reduced budget that more realistically reflects historical income and expenses. While the board does project expenses to exceed income in 2019, the amount of this loss is less than a third of prior year deficits. Additionally, a reality-based business plan is being developed for hosted ministry and other revenue generating activities to become sustainable within 3 years.

The creation of the new Director of Briarwood Leadership Center position is an adaptive step in moving us forward towards this vision of a leadership center. A center that is unique in touching lives through camping, retreats, leadership development, and community engagement. To achieve this vision has required making difficult decisions and changing models of accountability and process. As we continue to move forward, I invite your constructive thoughts and most of all your commitment, including participation in events and financial support, for our work together. To build a ministry requires sacrifice and a willingness to change. I am grateful for the support of your elected council members and the boards of our synod. Thank you for your support, and most of all, for your prayers.

In Christ,

Bishop Erik K.J. Gronberg