



Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

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**Rooted in God's Love,
We strive to be Relational
Agents of God's
Transformative Grace.**

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On February 6, 2021, the Outdoor Ministry Committee of the Illinois Conference voted to suspend our sponsored Summer Camp Programs for the SUMMER of 2021.

This decision is heartbreaking to each and every one of us. We know the important role that summer youth camp programming provides. We know that our children and youth are suffering mentally, socially, and spiritually from the isolation that the Covid-19 pandemic is causing. We also know that our primary responsibility is to the physical well-being of our campers, counselors, and staff.

It is necessary to make this decision now so that planning for "replacement programming" can begin immediately. Some possibilities include but are not limited to Family Camps, Virtual camps and efforts such as 2020's "Camp in a Box".

Covid-19 requirements impact our traditional program in at least three fundamental ways:

- ✓ camps simply cannot function without volunteer Director, Counselors and Program Leaders: the present health concerns for individuals; the lack of rapid and concurrent testing; and the likelihood of quarantine requirements prior to and following camp make it impossible to provide adequate staff to lead and run traditional camps.
- ✓ the numerical requirements mandated by social distance and indoor protocols will result in the "halving" of normal camp participants; this is both an economic drag on individual Camps as well as the revenue streams for the Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill.
- ✓ the American Camp Association (ACA) update on January 22, 2021 indicates that best practices will be for small groups of campers to stay together all day, each day. Campers remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects. Outdoor activities are prioritized. All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county, community).

We are committed to planning, working, and praying to ensure this important ministry can survive and thrive in the future, so that our children and youth will once again be able to step out of the ordinary and into the sacred at Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill.

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