



**A REPORT OF THE INPUT FROM FIVE LISTENING/DISCERNMENT SESSIONS  
REGARDING THE FUTURE OF  
TALL OAKS CONFERENCE CENTER**

September 9, 2022

**Summary**

Presentations of five researched options for the future of Tall Oaks were given to Greater Kansas City Disciples in five different locations around the Region during the July and August 2022. The sessions lasted between one and a half to two hours. Each presentation was pre-recorded to allow more time for questions for clarification. Each participant was given an input sheet to complete and turn in. Conversations were often impassioned, and many questions were raised that informed members of the Regional Executive Committee who would make a recommendation to the Regional Board in advance of its next regularly scheduled meeting on September 26, 2022.

The five presentations and a lot of other materials have been posted on a special web page devoted to this exercise. <https://www.kcdisciples.org/todr.html>

After weeks of reviewing the input from the listening/discernment sessions, the Executive Committee decided to move that the Region put the property on the market for sale in August 2023 to the highest bidder and invest the proceeds of the sale (minus expenses incurred at or for Tall Oaks between now and the time of the sale). The invested funds would be restricted and invested with a percentage of the annual market gains to be used for the spiritual nurture of Greater Kansas City Disciples (with special emphasis on ministry with young Disciples). Wording for that endowment fund would need to be finalized at the next regular Board meeting if the motion placed by the Executive Committee passes. At this point, no one can say what the outcome of the vote will be.

The motion presumed holding summer church camp at Tall Oaks in 2023.

**What the Input Sheets Revealed**

A total of 150 participant input sheets were collected. The clear preference among those who completed sheets was for a pilot project (#3) followed by a vision for expanded ministry (#4) or a hybrid combination of the two.

On the back of the input sheet were spaces to indicate their commitments to offer support.

**116/150** offered to pray

**72/150** offered to contribute financially

**66/150** offered to volunteer and many were specific about what they would continue or offer to do

Participants were also offered an opportunity to share their contact information and their preferred method of contact. **109/150** shared their contact information.

To put this in perspective, there are, according to the 2021 Disciples Yearbook report, **39/74** Greater Kansas City Disciples congregations reported total membership of **11,621** and **4,198** in average worship attendance. The total number of participants (estimated at **200**) in the five listening/discernment sessions held Sunday afternoons at 2:00 pm was around **4.8%** of the average worship attendance reported from **39/74** congregations in 2021.

The input sheets were tallied and sent each week to each of the five presenters and to members of the Regional Executive Committee. Thought was given to publishing them on this webpage but to protect privacy, we decided that a summary would have to do. All the input sheets are in a file at the Merriam Christian Church and can be viewed upon request.

### **How did we get to this point?**

Ask twelve different GKC Disciples and you will get twelve different answers. What they are likely to have in common is the realization that a small portion of the whole Region has carried the torch and done most of the giving and volunteer work to keep Tall Oaks running. Now, at age 61, the campus needs a minimum of \$350,000 to address additional deferred repairs, replacements, and upgrades. News that our Region needed to decide about the future of Tall Oaks in September resulted in the decision by one of the biggest non-Disciples groups to find another place for its camps in 2023. (Camp Encourage)

We heard plenty of blame for the inattention to deferred maintenance and capital upkeep. There was disagreement over the cost for keeping Tall Oaks afloat. We also heard from a couple dozen young adult leaders that they were ready to take on more leadership and offer more volunteer and financial assistance. Most of them participated in one of the listening/discernment exercises.

The bottom line was that we, Greater Kansas City Disciples collectively, did not keep our end of the bargain to steward with excellence the gift that God had entrusted to us. We treated Tall Oaks like a vacation cottage – all invested while there, forgotten by all but a small part of our Region when we were absent.

Regional leaders knew that postponing a decision one way or the other was irresponsible. We would appreciate your prayers that we may act like the Church we say we are and do better going forward with all that God has entrusted to our care.