

To the General Superintendent, Dr. J.K. Warrick, District Superintendent, Rev. Art Alexander; fellow ministers; delegates; members and friends of the 107th Annual District Assembly of the Metro NY District, it is my privilege and honor to report as the Director of Business Development at Taconic Retreat Center, otherwise known as Camp Taconic. While Camp Taconic is a very important part of who we are as an organization, I am not going to be speaking to you about that. I am going to leave that to our SDMI President, Rev. Christine Paolino, who is working diligently with her committee on the summer camp program. I would like to talk to you about Taconic Retreat.

So much has been happening at Taconic Retreat over the last year, that it's hard to know where to start. I guess the best place to start would be to say that God is on the move at Taconic! There has been a renewal of sorts, a rejuvenation that is so encouraging to watch unfold. In the six years that I have been with Taconic, there have been so many changes from programming to staffing to facilities and all along the way there has been constant confirmation from the Lord that Taconic is His place and He has a plan for it...a plan MUCH larger than we could have imagined.

To begin with, there has been a steady increase in usage of the Retreat Center over the last couple of years. As many Nazarene camps are shutting their doors around the country, Taconic has seen tremendous growth. I am a statistics person and just for fun, I began tracking different statistics when I began at Taconic in 2008. Now, I'm glad that I did! Our statistics show the Nazarene usage as follows:

2008 – 34%
2009 – 28%
2010 – 23%
2011 – 23%
2012 – 18%
2013 – 32%
2014 – 48%

While this is very encouraging to us, the Nazarene denomination is not the only denomination that uses Taconic for their ministry. There are several denominations, along with non-denominational churches and organizations that have partnered with Taconic for many, many years. Some of them even back to the days of Rev. Jay Bergers.

In order to remain relevant in today's ever changing culture, we have been watching very closely the trends in Christian Camping and have seen some very significant changes developing. Christian Camps are not just summer camps anymore. For instance, many churches are using Christian Camps for leadership development of their staff. We are also seeing many churches across the denominations holding events such as Encounter Weekends, or "Encuentros". This is an outreach program that is done mostly in the Hispanic community whereby they introduce the un-churched to the Gospel of Jesus Christ at an Encounter Weekend. I have seen so many churches put a lot of work into these weekends and they are very intentional about reaching people for Christ. This has brought about tremendous growth in their churches and more and more people coming to know the Lord. Taconic holds baptisms throughout the year and on average several hundred people are baptized in our lake yearly. Hence why Taconic is often referred to as "Holy Ground". More and more families are using our facilities for events such as weddings, high school graduations. We hold soccer tournaments in the Spring each year as well.

Taking into account all of these things, it became very clear earlier this year that Taconic needed to make some changes in order to stay relevant for these groups and these events. For instance, we needed to solidify our identity once and for all. Are we a camp or are we a retreat center? We needed to ask the question, "Why *does* Taconic exist? What is our purpose and how can we serve the Kingdom of God better?" "What are our goals and how can we accomplish them?" While we hold summer camps in the summer, we have discovered that we are not a summer camp. It became clear to us that the Lord wanted us to focus our attention on serving churches in other ways. To that end, we have put together a Ministry Alignment Plan.

We have written a Mission Statement that states:

"To glorify God through providing exemplary services to our guests, and thus help facilitate the growth of churches, the planting of new churches and the advancement of the Kingdom of God."

The Taconic Vision states:

“To become a ministry center that provides an environment of peace, provides restoration, facilitates learning and works with ministry partners in kingdom building.”

Having adjusted our plan, we knew that we needed to make some changes in order to be able to fulfill our mission and vision. We needed to “up our game” so to speak. We started small...we started serving our meals family style. We no longer have our guests stand in line for their meals. We trained our CREW to interact with the guests, to provide service with a smile. We took an inventory of what our facilities had to offer and decided that we needed to make changes there as well. In order to provide exemplary services, we needed to provide a great night sleep and delicious, healthy meals. We needed spaces for people to pray together, places where people could sit and enjoy a cup of coffee on a comfortable sofa, little nooks and crannies around the property where one could commune with nature and with the Lord. We needed conference rooms conducive to learning and teaching. We decided it was time to put an Improvement Plan in place as well.

Improvement Projects

- Renovation of Lobby and Offices to include Concierge Desk and more comfortable seating
 - Addition of Deck onto White Hall
 - Renovation of Gift Shop and addition of Café
 - Rebuilding of Outdoor Chapel with Amphitheater
 - Addition of Prayer Stations around property
 - New mattresses throughout entire facility
- New linens, blankets, curtains, and blinds in each lodging room
 - New flooring in Miller House
 - New flooring in Conference Rooms
- Addition of mounted projectors, pull-down screens, TV’s and DVD players in every conference room
 - Furnishing and decorating of Lake House and A-frame house for rental by guests
 - Purchase of new conference room chairs

While this is quite a long list, we believe it will get done. To date, we have replaced the mattresses in all of the Berger Cottages, we have renovated the Guest Services office and have created a Leadership Center (photos), through what I believe to be a truly “God moment” at the Men’s Retreat, we had over 70 men volunteer to help us with the renovations of the lobby and the offices. The blueprints are drawn up and have been given to Bronx Bethany, who has offered to renovate the lobby for us. The Mt. Vernon Brazilian Church has offered to do all the fine carpentry work to our Concierge desk and gift shop counter. The Assembly of God district has offered to put the deck onto the back of White Hall for us. Pastors and lay leaders are going to be doing the work themselves. We had a Korean church visit us over Christmas and said that they would fund a project as long as they didn’t have to do the work! Our projections for this year in terms of guest group usage is very strong and we are seeing new partnerships develop each month. I wish I had time to tell you all the stories of what has transpired over this past year...so encouraging.

This is tremendous progress for Taconic and we are so excited to see what God is going to do this year. While we know that the Lord will provide for His ministry, we are going to need your help. We still need volunteers to help complete projects, individuals and churches who will provide funding for the things listed that need to be purchased and your prayers as we navigate through all of these changes. God has been so faithful to Taconic, He is clearly growing this ministry and we truly believe that He has a much bigger plan...one that far exceeds our expectations. We just need to be ready for it.

I close my report on one final note...Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you this past year. The friendships I have developed with all of you are priceless to me. It has truly been my honor and my greatest joy.

Respectfully submitted,
Veronica Tumbarello
Director of Business Development

