

An Overture to the Presbytery of St. Augustine regarding the future of Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center

**Overture Title: Preserving Montgomery’s Mission and Ministry**

Overture Sponsors: Jason Salvagni and Tommy Lane  
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**Overture endorsed to Presbytery by unanimous vote of the Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center Committee:**

Glenn Dickson, Marcia Graham, Jessi Higginbotham, Jim Bullock, Milton Fulton, Ralph Moulder, Tommy Lane, Robert Lombard, Barbara Martin, Jason Salvagni, Roger Martin, Lexi Green

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Overture Authors:

Jason Salvagni - I am a member of Memorial Presbyterian in St. Augustine and have been active as a VBS instructor and Sunday School teacher there since moving to Florida 8 years ago. I have 3 girls who have all attended Montgomery since they were old enough to do so.

I am a successful entrepreneur, Venture Capitalist and technology executive, focused on exponential growth through sales, marketing, process implementation, hiring, training, and acting as Interim Executive. My resume includes Wall Street, startup and troubled company/turn-around experience, and I pride myself in taking great companies to the next phase of profitability and lean operation.

I am certain that with our current collection of experience, talent and passion on the Montgomery BOD, we can again make Montgomery a gem to the Presbytery and an example of Christianity-in-action to everyone that steps onto our grounds.

Tommy Lane - I have been a member in this Presbytery since birth, my mother having been a member at Kanapaha where she was baptized in 1928. Around age 10 my family moved our membership to Highlands Gainesville where my membership stayed until Highlands was disbanded. My current membership is at Kanapaha.

For the past 13 years I have served as CRE at McIntosh Presbyteryian.



The first of the Great Ends of the Church is to “proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humankind.”

The second is “like unto the first,” to “provide for the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God.”

Since 1957, Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center – or as many of us know it, Camp Montgomery – has been our Presbytery’s centerpiece effort to pass on the faith to the next generation.

Through the ensuing decades of change, of continual reformation, of the Church’s ebb away from societal endorsement, of schism and its always- related financial impact, Camp Montgomery has been our stalwart missional identity to whosoever will come.

While we are aware of the Camp’s value as an economic asset, and while we realize the potential for revenue has been largely untended and is basically untapped, Camp Montgomery’s real essence is its consistency of ministry – to thousands of kids and adults, some of whom are here today, and to so many that have yet to be reached.

“Under the oaks at Montgomery” has resonated with so many children over the past 61 years, and countless people truly “heard” the Gospel for the first time while at Montgomery.

Camp Montgomery is a one-of-a-kind asset. If lost, it is quite literally irreplaceable. Even more important, it is our Presbytery’s primary missional effort. To lose such an integral part of who we are and why we exist as a Presbytery would be an irredeemable loss.

Given the missional and historic importance of Camp Montgomery’s ministry we believe it is vital to not only keep the facility operational, but also to elevate it to a profit center for Presbytery.

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With Presbytery revenue reduced by approximately 50% below 2008 totals (from approximately \$1 Million to \$500,000 annually,) current levels of Presbytery financial support of Camp Montgomery are unsustainable.

For the Camp to survive, significant change is necessary, such that Presbytery’s financial contribution to the Camp can be gradually lowered and eventually suspended, and the facility can generate sufficient funds to become revenue-neutral, then progress to being a source of revenue to Presbytery.

**The following is our vision to accomplish this goal:**

Our specific strategic goal is to preserve the mission and ministry of Montgomery, enhance and increase its reach for the Gospel, manage it to revenue-neutrality, and through due-diligence to management, infrastructure, and program, shepherd it to the place where it becomes a profit-center for Presbytery.

Reviewing the agreed upon data, we do indeed see that revenue in the last three years has dropped precipitously, and we agree that this decline is a direct result of the decrease in number of people using the camp. The numbers of "people" utilizing traditional summer camps, traditional Christian summer camps and verticals of other retreat center experiences have NOT decreased nationwide however; they have grown.

There are myriad instances, even nationally within the Presbyterian Church, of traditional camps such as Montgomery being turned around and achieving profitability while still serving their primary Mission - in our case, connecting children to Jesus Christ. Thus, an opportunity has been squandered. The mismanagement of infrastructure, stagnancy of programming, lack of marketing, and negative word-of-mouth that has resulted are the reasons for the decline in campers of any revenue vertical, and thus the reason for the precipitous decline in total revenue.

As a committee, we see that with the addition of the Board of Director's proposed revenue generated and funds raised we can accomplish revenue neutrality (no financial contribution from Presbytery.) Our goal, supported by our projections, is to reach this point of revenue neutrality and financial independence in Q4, Y1 of the Plan. Upon reaching this stated goal, we will commit to returning a fixed, year-over-year portion of MCC profits to the Presbytery. This percentage will be decided upon by a vote of the MCC BOD. Our 3 year budget to attain revenue neutrality is attached.

The financial impact of our plan is straightforward: Through appropriate use of existing Montgomery funds, the re-finance of existing debt with the judicious addition of additional strategic debt for working capital, increased visibility and the continual,

focused mining of revenue sources, gradually reduce Presbytery's financial contribution to Montgomery, to the point within 3 years where Montgomery is generating contributions back to Presbytery. Any additional debt will be strategic debt utilized for the creation of double or triple that amount in new revenue.

Our Strategic Plan addresses these goals as follows:

**Create a culture where everyone is one heart and soul working together for the common good to the glory of God**

We believe the financial rejuvenation of Montgomery, the enhancement of its mission and ministries, and the judicious management of it to sound financial condition will surely go far in faithfully enacting this objective. We will work in good faith and will assume the same of all our Presbytery partners.

**Thrive and grow in faithfulness in Jesus Christ**

Our position is that a rejuvenated Montgomery is the shortest route to this objective and our entire effort will be to this end. Absent energetic witness to Jesus, we atrophy. With such a witness, our results will likely be incalculable.

**Seek and connect with young people in all aspects of our ministry**

Our committee enthusiastically endorses this objective and would posit that our strategic plan for Montgomery absolutely accomplishes this aim in every aspect. It is Montgomery's reason for existing.

**Maximize Montgomery Conference Center as our spiritual asset**

Well, YES! A reading of our Overture will demonstrate that it simply resonates with this objective. If we abandon Montgomery, we have absolutely no chance to support this objective.

Our Overture envisions the possibility of some changes in MPCC lines of authority. Specifically we advocate for management of the Plan – for the next 5 years – to be vested in the Montgomery Committee (BOD,) working within PCUSA polity and with a commitment to full transparency. This proposal has been brought before the Board and was agreed that said proposal would be in the best interest of effective management of Montgomery, and wholly along the lines of best-practice. The decision was made to take the proposal to Presbytery and jointly come to an agreement regarding a new management structure, emphasizing Board autonomy with Presbytery oversight. This structure was endorsed by Brian Frick, Associate for Camps and Conferences, Presbyterian Church.

In the next section we have addressed the above goals, and our concrete steps to achieve said goals, in more detail.

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We will be hiring a Fundraising/Marketing Director to assist the Montgomery Executive Director and the BOD in the goal to ramp revenues and funds raised for Montgomery. As we proceed, the following responsibilities will be delegated to the team member(s) whose skill-set is best suited to the particular task.

- Grants identified and applied for
  - Eligible Categories: 501(c)(3) - Educational - STEM - Child Development
  - PCUSA-specific grants - Disaster Relief - Conservation and Environmental
  - Foundations with Presbyterian/Christian Ties
  
- Corporate Sponsors identified and contacted
  - BOD network utilized, as well as new Fundraising/Marketing Director working to accomplish this ongoing task
  
- Mortgage debt refinanced, including lower IR and raise of working capital
  - Everbank (present holder) and BOD network utilized to find best fit for rate/term

- Summer Camp enrollment boosted from Presbytery and expansion to other denominations
  - Montgomery campaign to “retain customers” reaching out to past camp families, as well as ongoing outbound marketing campaigns throughout the Presbytery and entire FL/South GA Christian community
  
- Awareness campaign in Presbyterian AND OTHER churches - Larger churches such as Celebration and 11:22
  - These churches outside of the Presbyterian denomination can be targeted for individual retreats for their church body, as well as for bolstering summer camp ranks
  - Individual visits during and after services by BOD members, Montgomery staff, and Marketing Director
  
- Additional camps/retreats added in interim of physical plant upgrades
  - Young Life (St. Johns County, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra)
  - Other Churches outside Presbyterian denomination
  - Special needs camps, STEM camps, school system environmental camps
  - City Year, other Not for profit training/corporate retreats
  
- PCUSA volunteers, Individual church volunteer groups to provide physical plant upgrades on weekends (room and board provided) - Pitch these as “service weekends” and have individual BOD members and Lexi supervise
  
- Fundraising
  - Individual donors - Private Family Foundations - Wills and IRS Gifts
  - Presbytery churches

- Annual Capital Campaign and Corporate Sponsors/"Friends of Montgomery" Banquet
- **AN ACTIVE BOARD** for the duration of the full 5 years of the plan

**To summarize the Committee's Overture:**

- We, the Committee, feel strongly that the Gospel message directed to children and young adults is more necessary now than ever before.
- Montgomery is our Presbytery's best method of reaching these children and young adults for Jesus.
- The Church has an obligation – as a primary and defining mission – to connect people of all ages to Jesus, and we believe Montgomery can be of vital effect to this end.
- We believe the asset to be irreplaceable.
- We do not believe this ministry has "had its day."
- We believe that past management stumbles cannot be allowed to torpedo such a necessary ministry.
- We understand current funding by Presbytery is unsustainable, but do not see an asset sale as the answer.
- We believe an innovative and entrepreneurial strategy, championed and driven by seasoned professional business-people who are spiritually convicted to make a concerted effort to salvage the mission, is necessary.
- We are willing to commit to this endeavor for five years- to offer our time, experience, connections, expertise, energy, and imagination for the purpose of continuing the mission, revitalizing the ministry, and realistically bringing Montgomery to revenue neutrality and with due-diligence, to profitability.
- We are willing to commit that in the event we are not successful, we will discern such an outcome as the Lord's will that this particular effort for the Gospel should be closed and the asset sold. In that event, we will not oppose such an action.

Thank you for your time today and your prayerful consideration.