



Dear Friend of Prescott Pines,

I'd like to share some exciting news concerning the future of Venture Church Network Southwest (VCNSW) and Prescott Pines Christian Camp!



**The board has voted unanimously to sell Prescott Pines to UCYC.**

A little backstory.

Venture Church Network Southwest exists to help churches take bold next steps, seeing gospel-centered transformational churches in every community.

We realized we need to take bold next steps to focus on our primary mission: church planting and church health.

In 2019 the VCNSW board set a 10-year goal of planting or replanting 30 congregations by the end of 2030. Then Covid hit slowing down some of the process, but I am excited to report that we have 4 new churches and 1 new satellite campus as of October 2022! That is 5 new congregations towards our goal of 30!

Coming out of Covid, which was a very difficult time for camp, the VCNSW board put together a task force to look at long-term plans for Prescott Pines. Our desire was to find a good way forward by which the camp could thrive for many years to come, while the Association could reach its goals of planting and replanting congregations.

We spoke with camping leaders across the US while looking at trends and philosophies of Christian camping. We talked to developers and community leaders in Prescott about the vacant land that the camp has (about 44 acres) and what it would take to develop that, either for camp ministry or for other development opportunities that could provide funding for both the camp and Association.

**The unexpected.**

As we spent time in prayer seeking the Lord's direction to find the best path forward that allows both the camp and VCNSW to flourish something unexpected happened.

Another Christian camp in Prescott known as United Christian Youth Camp or UCYC had been seeking the Lord's direction about consolidating their 3 camps into one property with an even greater number of beds to minister in future years.



**This conversation culminated in a Letter of Intent in September on the part of UCYC to buy Prescott Pines Camp.**

It made total sense. For 70 years UCYC has been a camp-focused organization who pioneers fun, quality experiences in a safe outdoor setting where the gospel is presented in loving relationships to grow and expand. Their mission is to *'help churches make more and better disciples by creating experiences that accelerate relationship building.'*

UCYC's vision for the property will mean that the 75-year rich history of Prescott Pines and Christian camping will go on for decades, reaching more people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It also means the land we have not been able to develop for all these years, will now be developed and used for the Kingdom of God!

The VCNSW board voted unanimously in September to accept the Letter of Intent from UCYC. We're now in the process of drawing up the official contract and beginning the due diligence period that proceeds the sale.

I know that this raises a lot of questions, too many to answer in one communication, but I want to try and address some of what I would expect are the biggest questions.

**What is the timing of when the camp will sell?**

Per our agreement, the close of escrow is slated for May 1, 2023. Since many of the staff live at the camp and will need time to find housing and job transitions, the current plan is to stop the camping operation on March 1, 2023. We're planning to run all scheduled camps, including Winter Camp through the end of February 2023.

**What about staff?**

Obviously, our staff is a major part of our concern in this transition. The board is developing generous ways to help the staff, from job/career coaching and placement to financial help with severance and insurance when the camp ceases its operation.

In the background of all that has been going on, our long-term Camp Director Jim Trail and his wife Heather had communicated to us a year ago that they're moving into retirement in the Fall of 2023. We're so appreciative their faithful service and leadership through these past 18 years at Prescott Pines. Thus we're planning a retirement celebration in the future.

### **Will VCNSW retain any of the property?**

Yes, we will.

Not included in this sale is the large house built in the mid-2000's known as Groom Creek Lodge. We will also retain ownership of a small piece of land adjacent to the Groom Creek property that has the Old Marapai Log House, a water well that feeds Groom Creek and a plot of ground a cell tower company is leasing. The plan is to upgrade these two homes as places of respite/retreat/meetings for our pastors and church leaders.

### **What about groups and churches that are already booked past March 1?**

We'll work with all currently booked groups to assist them in finding another camp. We understand that this is not a perfect solution, but we'll do all in our power to help them find a new place that will serve them well.

### **As church leaders we strongly believe in the POWER of CAMP.**

Prescott Pines camp has been an incredible part of our heritage. Many of us attended it growing up. It's been an important part of our spiritual journey. That's why selling to another camp ministry rather than to residential developers was so important.

Change is hard.

I know for many this will be one of those 'bitter-sweet' developments.

But on the other hand, to know that it is now set up to continue to be the premier Christian camping property for decades to come, reaching people with the gospel and helping others in their spiritual journey is exciting!

To know that the 44 acres that were purchased by faith over 75 years ago, that we have not had the resource to develop into a meaningful ministry area, will now be developed and used as effectively as possible - I believe this is a wonderful win for the kingdom and work of God!

I am also excited about the freedom and resource this brings to our Association to help us plant and replant churches, and to bring health to churches that are struggling. It truly is a “bold next step” but one that I believe will pay great dividends for the work of God in the Southwest.

As more details become clear, we’ll seek to communicate as quickly as possible. Our board would certainly appreciate your prayers for wisdom and discernment as we process through this!

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to me at [Steve.e@vcnsw.org](mailto:Steve.e@vcnsw.org).

Serving Him Together!

**Steve Engram**

*Senior Pastor of Desert Community Church in Goodyear, AZ and Regional Executive of the Venture Church Network Southwest.*