

# **PRESBYTERY OF EASTERN VIRGINIA**

## **Summary History of the Makemie Roots & Wings Project**

**(January 2008)**

### **Presbytery Establishes Its Goal for Makemie Woods (Mid- 1990's)**

Based on a long range planning study, the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia accepted the recommendation of the Makemie Woods Advisory Committee to improve the Makemie Woods site for youth camp ministry and to create comfortable and modern facilities for adult ministry, including conferences, retreats, workshops and large group meetings, meal functions and performances.

### **Interim Presbytery Leadership Advances Makemie Woods Role (Late 1990's)**

Interim Presbytery leadership advanced the role of Makemie Woods and invested in professionally developed plans for a modern conference center to expand the mission to include adult ministry with more contemporary facilities for programs and events requiring overnight and dining accommodations.

### **Presbytery Creates a Selectively Appointed Visioning Planning Committee.**

**(Early 2000's)**

This group included lay persons with varied experience with major projects and knowledge of Makemie Woods from churches of the Presbytery. Some members represented churches with the known greatest potential giving within the Presbytery. The outcome of this committee's deliberations was the identification of the facilities required to meet the Presbytery's mission and long term vision for Makemie Woods. Although the plan was ambitious, it represented the consensus vision for Makemie Woods and served to frame the Makemie "Roots & Wings" capital campaign.

### **Presbytery Creates a Capital Campaign Steering Committee (2003)**

Based on two capital funds feasibility studies (1998) and (2002), the capital campaign committee accepted the long term vision and based on consultant cost projections (2002) set the goal at \$ 6 million. The Presbytery voted to add to the campaign goal a \$ 300,000 contribution to the new church development at Stone House Presbyterian Church, thus raising the goal to \$ 6.3 million. Recognizing that feasibility studies had projected less funding than the established goal, the committee undertook interviews with several experienced fund development consultants and selected one to guide the Roots & Wings campaign. The committee elected to present the complete vision for Makemie Woods, even if the project had to be implemented in phases over a longer period of time and could require more than one capital funds campaign. John and Pollie Morison (elders at King's Grant Presbyterian Church) were asked to co-chair the Makemie Roots & Wings campaign.

### **Conduct of the Capital Campaign (2004-06)**

Prior to the official launch of the campaign, church membership data was centralized at the Presbytery office to facilitate mailings, accounting, and follow-up with donors making multi-year pledges. Training was provided to local church contacts to ensure that the campaign was presented effectively to church Sessions and their congregations. Selected major donor prospects were invited to special briefings on the campaign and presentations were made to church sessions and groups by invitation. Through PCUSA, the campaign was able to review the giving potential of identified major donors (all within a handful of PEVA churches) at six and seven figure giving history. These prospects were to be solicited personally prior to the public launch of the campaign. However, several of these churches simultaneously launched their own capital campaigns, thus hampering the Roots & Wings solicitation of their major donors. Considering that these donors would not be available to the Roots & Wings campaign for two to five years and PEVA was already engaged contractually with fundraising counsel, the decision was made to launch the public campaign. Within months of the launch Presbytery-wide, Hurricane Katrina struck on the Gulf Coast, which focused charitable giving for months and nonprofit and charitable organizations nationwide were impacted significantly. The campaign committee chose to go silent during this period, but authorized an end of the calendar year (2006) second mailing to 9,000 Presbyterian homes in the hope of re-energizing interest in the Roots & Wings effort for Makemie Woods.

To date, the campaign has received pledges approaching \$ 1.2 million from 373 donors, with approximately \$ 77,000 still to be fulfilled from multi-year pledges. All obligations of the project to date (architectural/engineering fees, permits, fund development consultant and campaign costs, restoration of PEVA accounts used to “up-front” the campaign, construction of the Makemie Woods maintenance building to replace the original destroyed in a hurricane and fulfillment of the obligation to Stone House Presbyterian Church) have been completed. Cash remaining (including outstanding multi-year pledges) is projected at approximately \$ 585,000, while construction costs have more than doubled since the original projections in 2002.

### **Presbytery Creates a Makemie Roots & Wings Project Oversight Task Force (2006)**

The composition of this task force represents a blend of carry-over members of previous committees and individuals bringing additional experience to the implementation phase of the project. Given the facts of the situation, the oversight group has taken action to ensure that project obligations were met (described above), monitored campaign pledge and fulfillment results, and undertaken an examination of options in light of the fact that the funding results are well below what is needed to accomplish any significant impact on the project vision. The infusion of additional funding is critical to this project.

The task force initially concluded that the next most feasible element of the project for implementation was the multi-purpose indoor activity building (already named by the Presbytery in honor of Susan Marie Sauer and for which several significant restricted gifts have been received). The Presbytery accepted the task force recommendation in early 2007 to proceed with detailed plans and updated cost estimates. In late 2007, a focus group of pastors (representing large and mid-size churches, long-term and short-term PEVA pastors, as well as churches with significant potential donor wealth) was convened to review the status of the project and advise the oversight task force on options and attitudes which might stimulate interest and additional funding. The group steered the project oversight task force's thinking toward the impact of building a modest (first phase of the conference center) "lodge" type facility to sleep up to 32 attendees and provide meeting space and a modest kitchen. The advantage would be to provide a comfortable facility for small group meetings (e.g. session retreats and workshops) with comfortable overnight accommodations to get more adults to Makemie Woods to recognize the value of the site for a wider range of local church and Presbytery programs and activities. The result could be a greater degree of awareness and support of Makemie Woods, which could result in support for the long range vision.

**The PEVA Makemie Roots & Wings Oversight Task Force has considered the merits of this new idea to build next a "lodge" type facility (sleeping up to thirty-two people) as the first phase of the adult conference center. Consultation with the architect has produced a viable approach and the task force is persuaded that providing a comfortable functional facility for adults should be recommended to Presbytery for authorization to pursue more detailed plans and funding. (See recommendation below)**

A reality the oversight task force has raised is the issue that the Presbytery currently subsidizes Makemie Woods youth camp program to the tune of approximately \$ 200,000 per year and this cost could continue to grow with increasing operating costs. Subsidy support of Makemie Woods represents the largest mission support program of the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia. The question remains whether the Presbytery is prepared to continue this level of support indefinitely and whether the youth camp program can be sustained without it. In hindsight, part of the rationale to create a cash positive conference facility was to relieve or cap the increasing Presbytery subsidy of the camp program.

Considering the fact that less than \$ 600,000 will be available (once multi-year pledges are fulfilled in the current Roots & Wings campaign) and construction costs have more than doubled from original projections, the PEVA oversight task force is unable to proceed with any of the remaining elements of the project without the infusion of additional funding. The task force has researched and pursued a number of options, some extreme, some more traditional, including:

- Approach the identified major donors not reached in the original campaign;
- Secure church annual giving to R & W capital fund (authorized by Presbytery in January 2007 with only three churches responding to date);
- Conduct another member-wide appeal with a compelling message;
- Pursue in-kind contributions to offset project costs (signage, roads, etc.);
- Offer church underwriting and naming opportunities of specific elements to offset expenditures;
- Secure church pledges for annual usage of Makemie Woods facilities;
- Sell Makemie Woods and secure a smaller site and build a more modest and modern facility more centrally located in the region;
- Pursue bank financing;
- Pursue a “build/lease/purchase” arrangement with a local builder.
- Extend the recent “Roots & Wings” capital campaign or organize a new PEVA-wide capital funds campaign

### **Critical Lessons Learned**

- Active clergy and professional educator support and advocacy is critical since they are key local church decision-makers for camp and conference/retreat planning;
- Communication to clergy, sessions and congregations was uneven and less than effective in this project;
- Awareness and support for Makemie Woods by those in the pews was negligible, as evidenced by the response to two mass mailings (373 out of a potential of 9,000);
- Key major donor base support critical to success of campaign was not available to the Roots & Wings campaign because of competing local church priorities in key locations;
- Contributions directed to PEVA rather than through local churches may have been a negative factor for some donor prospects;
- Uncertainty of the viability of the camp program and the commitment of Presbytery to continue annual subsidy support could have been a negative factor for some donors.

## **The Questions**

If additional capital funding is essential to realize any further and significant results in the Roots & Wings vision for Makemie Woods in the short run and assure the continuance of the camp program for youth in the long run, what is the best course of action for the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia? What would it take to make every church in the Presbytery regard Makemie Woods as their camp and conference center? Only then will they be committed truly to the vision for Makemie Woods and its continuance.

## **Task Force Recommendation to Presbytery (January 2008)**

**The PEVA Makemie Roots & Wings Project Oversight Task Force recommends to Presbytery that it be authorized to pursue detailed plans, costs and local government approvals to build the first phase of the proposed adult conference center (a lodge type facility) with accommodations to sleep up to thirty-two people, with meeting space and kitchen facilities, as the next element of the project to be implemented; and that the Oversight Task Force be authorized to extend the Roots & Wings capital funding campaign to secure the additional funding needed for the project.**