



**FRIENDS
OF SILVER LAKE**

Friends of Silver Lake Update, April 2026

Introduction

Friends of Silver Lake, Inc. formed in November 2025 to unite the dispersed community that values the lifechanging work of Silver Lake Camp and Retreat Center, and to work toward a vision of future ministry in line with Silver Lake's historic mission. The organization has moved nimbly, faithfully, collaboratively, and diligently in responding to the Southern New England Conference's announcement that it will wind down operations at Silver Lake.

Background

The Missionary Society of Connecticut (MSC) was founded in 1798 as the first Congregational society in the United States. Its work focused on evangelism, education, and social justice.

In 1957, the year the United Church of Christ (UCC) was formed, the MSC purchased the site that would become Silver Lake. Silver Lake has been a sacred space for faith formation, a vital center for liberatory learning and social justice, and a haven for inclusivity and safety. Thousands of lives have been transformed through its outdoor ministry program. Alums have made meaningful contributions in their careers and communities, infusing their work and relationships with values cultivated at camp. Many have experienced a call to ministry, and many serve as lay leaders.

In January 2020, the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island Conferences of the UCC merged to form the Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ (SNEUCC).

In November 2025, the SNEUCC announced they would discontinue operations at Silver Lake. The Conference affirmed its commitment to consider all reasonable offers from alums and donors interested in purchasing the property and taking it over programmatically. The SNEUCC entered into a season of listening and discernment in its 2026 Strategic Plan, *The Ties That Bind*.

Actions

A group of dedicated stakeholders formed the non-profit organization, Friends of Silver Lake, Inc. Its Board of Directors comprises members from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island; it spans generations and brings together expertise from a variety of fields relevant to its mission. The Board engaged with clergy, churches, partners, neighbors, and other camps to understand their questions and concerns, and to welcome their wisdom and input.

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Friends of Silver Lake determined that sufficient collective will and commitment exists among the wider community to continue Silver Lake's ministry. Supporters contributed over \$50,000 as an initial investment to cover the operational expenses needed to take initiative toward this goal.

Board members examined camping trends within the UCC and beyond. Its members sought the expertise of the [Outdoor Ministries Association](#) (OMA) to learn more about a variety of successful camp transitions that have enabled the surviving and thriving of UCC camps across the country.

The Board established a Business Plan Committee to examine and develop feasible possibilities for preserving Silver Lake's legacy. They have evaluated a number of potential scenarios, examining risks and benefits across several factors such as missional continuity, historic identity, long-term sustainability, capital feasibility, risk allocation, and ownership clarity.

In April 2026, after significant due diligence and prayerful consideration, Friends of Silver Lake submitted a proposal to SNEUCC for continuing the ministry of Silver Lake. It is intended to open a dialogue about what might be possible and affirms willingness to continue explorations with the Conference to reach an optimal plan for both entities.

The proposal identifies key risks, dependencies, and planning assumptions to be addressed in establishing a viable operating plan, along with a detailed set of due diligence questions intended to support informed decision-making by both parties.

It reflects FOSL's readiness to assume responsibility for Silver Lake's future and invites SNEUCC to partner in a timely, mission-aligned transition that enables the ministry of Silver Lake to continue sustainably for future generations.

Looking Forward

As Friends of Silver Lake awaits further word from the SNEUCC, the organization continues to gather alums, build partnerships, and seek funding sources to continue Silver Lake's ministry. As the organization continues to grow, it is finding ways to weave together the many gifts of generous volunteers, and it is helping to ensure a phenomenal Summer 2026 at Silver Lake.

Please join [Friends of Silver Lake](#) in spreading the word and gathering resources to plant seeds for new growth in furthering Silver Lake's powerful mission. Thanks for your steadfast support!

References

friendsofsilverlake.com

omaucc.org

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