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First name: Bart

Last name: Smith

Organization: Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Title: Interim Pastor

Comments: Dear Forest Service Officials,

I write on behalf of the congregation I serve, Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Tucson, in strong support of Montlure Camp's appeal to gain a categorical exclusion for its restoration efforts as well as a 20-year extension of its operating permit.

This church, along with another Tucson Presbyterian church I've served, is a longstanding organizational champion of Montlure. Scores of our members over generations have had their lives transformed by the camp's programming. The site outside Greer is nothing short of "holy ground" because of the myriad of ways individuals and families have been impacted by their time at Montlure. I can't begin to count the stories I've heard of treasured memories and their enduring influence on people's faith and personal lives. The camp's serene mountain setting is in no small measure a critical aspect of those experiences, so preserving that particular land for Montlure's use is essential.

In considering whether or not to grant Montlure's request, I encourage you to think of it as a "seasonal church." It's a sacred gathering space in need of preserving, not only for the sake of those who have worshiped God there for years, but also for those future generations who haven't yet. Our young people need faith, community, nature education, outdoor experiences, device-free time, and the other unique opportunities Montlure provides. Making that possible is in your hands.

Respectfully,

Rev. Bart Smith