



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OPPORTUNITY PROFILE**



Consultants for Leadership Selection



About The Firs

Since the time of inception in 1921, The Firs has offered camp and conference programs for the purpose of impacting lives with the good news of Jesus Christ. Over the years, these programs at three locations, have capitalized on the breathtaking natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest. With its centennial taking place in 2021, The Firs has much to celebrate, and much more to dare to dream in ministry potential as it moves into its next century.

Three different locations provide The Firs with a broad diversity of programming opportunities to strategically attract a wide variety of children, youth, and adults with differing interests and demographics for the purpose of outreach and discipleship. With over 3M in revenue, 23 fulltime and 200+ part-time and seasonal staff, The Firs has a 22.5-acre Retreat Center and Day Camp on the outskirts of Bellingham, WA; a four story A-frame Chalet on 5 acres of lease land at Mt. Baker ski area; and a resident 119 acre youth camp, Camp Firwood, on almost a mile's worth of Lake Whatcom waterfront including a private island. Fun-filled activities and high-energy programs, Bible-based teaching, great food and tremendous service, have all contributed to make a stay at any of our sites an unforgettable experience. The greatest asset of The Firs, however, generation after generation, has always been the people. Staff, employees, volunteers, interns, camp counselors and dedicated workers, make the difference and count the most in the lives of our guests.

Historic examples of renowned Firs Conference & Retreat featured Speakers

Dr. Luis Palau – Founder Luis Palau Assoc. international evangelist, author
Dr. Howard Hendrix – Dallas Seminary faculty, author, speaker
Kay Arthur – author, speaker, Founder Precept Ministries
Dr. Ray Stedman – author, pastor, speaker
Dr. Joseph Stowell – Pres. Moody and Cornerstone University, author
Dr. John Hunter – Capernwray Bible School faculty, pastor, teacher
Dr. Willard Aldrich – Pres. Multnomah, author, speaker
Dr. Southerland – Pres. Biola, author, speaker
Dr. Feinberg – Talbot and Dallas Seminaries, author, speaker
Dr. Earl Radmacher – Pres. Western Seminary (Portland), author, speaker
Cathie Nicol – InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, international speaker

History



With a desire to use what God had given them for His purposes, Otis and Julia Whipple gathered a group of 35 people at their property overlooking Lake Whatcom in Bellingham, Washington, for a five-day retreat. Their purpose during that July week in 1921 was to “meet the Lord and strengthen the ties of an extended spiritual family”. During peak years of facility expansion and Christian camping philosophy development, well-known and highly respected authors, seminary faculty, and speakers

have been featured. They probably couldn't have imagined what was to follow: a string of camp and conference activity that has spanned many decades and grown into a multi-site, multi-program organization called The Firs.

Mission and Vision Statements

From its beginning, The Firs has focused on developing and maintaining a Christian camping ministry to God's glory with an emphasis on helping people believe in Jesus Christ. Utilizing the three facilities, The Firs' own ministry programming represents an average of 56% of the business usage; providing facilities to serve the church and Christian community represents the remainder.

Critical to The Firs organization is adherence and integration of the Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Doctrinal Statements:

- **Mission Statement** - The Firs exists for people to encounter Jesus and experience the love of God.
- **Vision Statement** - The vision of The Firs is to see our world changed through Christ-centered children and family ministries, conferences and camping initiatives.
- **Core Values** –
 1. Impacting Lives for Christ (Mt 28:19-20; I Jn 5:11-12)
 2. Communicating the Bible as truth (2 Tim. 3:16-17); Heb. 4:12-13)
 3. Partnering with the local Church (Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 3:12-15)
 4. Serving well in a safe environment (Rom. 12:10; I Pet. 4:10; Col. 3:23)
 5. Maintaining fiscal integrity (I Pet. 2:12; Phil. 2:15; 2 Cor. 8:20-21)
 6. Focusing on faith (Heb. 11:6; John 14:12)
- **Doctrinal Statement** – see attachment.



The Firs Programs, Camps and Retreats

Camp Firwood

Camp Firwood, with a capacity of 300 camper-beds, offers 10 weeks of high energy, multi-activity Christian youth camp for 7–18-year-olds in the summer. Currently ministering to youth over 10,000 camper days per season, Firwood is located on the shores of Lake Whatcom, and with its own private island, provides an unforgettable experience for all who attend.

The Firs Retreat Center

The Retreat Center offers a beautiful 9+ acre campus setting among mature fir and cedar trees, just 3 blocks from Lake Whatcom and our private beach. Great dining, private cabins and individual lodge rooms offer the opportunity to escape from hectic schedules in a serene environment.

Fircreek Day Camp

Exciting activities and program events under the direction of fabulous Summer Staff await children entering grades 1–6 at Fircreek Day Camp. The 12 acre area located across the street from The Firs Retreat Center, has a capacity of 90 day campers and provides 11 weeks of creative summer programming, serving over 3,000 camper days per season in a great environment that introduces kids to Jesus while having fun, making new friends, cultivating new interests and just being a kid.

The Firs Chalet at Mt. Baker

The four story 100 bed A-Frame Chalet on Mt. Baker (one-hour drive from The Firs Retreat Center) provides a summit setting for juniors through adults. The 5-acre property (lease land) sits in the midst of Mt. Baker- Snoqualmie National Forest and is only three-tenths of a mile from the Mt. Baker Ski Area. With Mt. Shuksan sitting at the back door of the Chalet, unique experiences and spectacular scenery offer great potential for high alpine adventure activities year-round.



After School Adventure

ASA (After School Adventure) provides a faith-inspired backdrop of fun and adventure for kindergarten through fifth grade students in the Bellingham School District. It offers programming during non-school hours, early release days, teacher workdays and some holidays. Utilizing the same property as the Fir creek summer Day Camp described above, ASA converts the location to serving over 5,300 camper days during the school year.

Preschool

Firs and Fiddleheads is the new preschool program (in “association with The Firs”) which provides children ages 3-5 opportunities to explore, play, discover and learn, while engaging with nature and the wonderment of Creation and the Creator, in their outdoor classroom during the school year. It is nestled in the towering trees of the Fir creek woods and is the same Firs property as ASA and Fir creek. <https://firsandfiddleheads.org/>

What others say about The Firs:

About vibrant and passionate faith walk since inception:

“...throughout our history we have seen one miracle after another...”

“...our leader must have the balance of hospitality and faith - an eye on the future but embracing our history...”

“...we have generations of families associated with The Firs—this adds loyalty and respect for the history”“...the history of The Firs from our Founders is rich with people very much in love with the Lord”; people who gave time, money and their heart for the service of the Lord...”

About programming:

“...we are unique in our offerings—day camp, retreat services, afterschool care, residential camps, pre-school, and a mountain retreat; God has been amazing...”

“...We are dedicated to serving our guests by providing biblically-based, safe and excellent programs...”

“...Camp Firwood is known as a place to find Jesus and have fun...”

“...we need to remember what made us great ... being willing to move forward in faith boldly”

About vision:

“...we are poised for the next 100 years (celebrating The Firs Centennial in 2021) ...”

“...our new Executive Director will need to provide great vision and strategy in order for the Firs to be revitalized and reenergized—from programs to properties to spiritual integrity...”

“...recently our growth has been a bit slow-moving, but we are ready to support our new Executive Director in the next chapter of The Firs...”

About property:

“...we own some amazing property that begs to be developed—we need a visionary to see what ‘could be’...”

“...There is a legacy of faithfulness throughout the years—God’s obvious sovereign hand in providing the resources and property—the Firwood Lakefront and The Chalet are amazing examples...”

“...The Firs Retreat Center is well situated for great opportunity to impact the urban environment ...”

About relationships:

“...there are tons of networking opportunities from Seattle to Vancouver BC to garner support for The Firs—it just has to be mined...”

“...we are like a real family; at times we have stress with each other but, all in all we deeply care and support each other; we are loyal...”

“...I grew up in the church, but it was my experience at Firwood that was foundational to my walk with Christ...”

“We are dedicated to serving our guests by providing biblically-based, safe and excellent programs.”

The Opportunity

The Firs has witnessed the blessings and hand of God over and over again throughout its 100-year history. Only eternity will reveal the full effect. The opportunity to become the next Executive Director of this organization presents the challenge and privilege of leading a highly motivated team in the pursuit of the next phase of God’s purposes in the life of this respected ministry.

While The Firs’ *past* is incredibly significant in terms of impact in individuals’ lives and multiple generations of families, its *future* is equally bright. The Firs leadership is driven by a sense of God’s missional call to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment by using the organization’s resources and expertise to attract, touch and transform the lives of people with the relevant and timeless message of Christ.

The next Executive Director will have the honor of giving guidance to an envisioned future that includes visionary programming for all ages including the youngest campers in Pre-School and Day Camp programs, children and youth in Camping and Retreat settings, college students in leadership roles, intergenerational programming that draws the family units closer together and closer to God. While focusing on youth and those who influence them – we will use relevant, attractive, year round programming at all our locations with curriculum that strengthens, trains, supports and encourages people of all ages to become all that they can become in and through Jesus Christ.



The Firs is blessed to have significant underdeveloped properties. The next Executive Director, working alongside the nine-member Board and 250-member Council will have the opportunity to envision the future expansion of The Firs. Deeply committed to the fulfillment of the Great Commission, the Executive Director will be an innovative visionary leader with an entrepreneurial spirit who will thrill to the excitement of renewing and refreshing the organization as it enters the next 100 years. Comfortable leading change, the next Executive Director will lead The Firs toward mission fulfillment through program expansion, the leveraging of facilities, expanding the external awareness in marketing and donations, resourcing and positioning staff to reach organizational goals and capacity for the purpose of reaching the greatest number of people with the Gospel.

The Position

Reporting to the Board, the Executive Director provides executive leadership for the entire organization by embodying, interpreting and defending sound biblical doctrine as well as The Firs vision, mission, core values, bylaws and Doctrinal Statement; acting as spokesperson for the ideals of Christian ministry, particularly those of Christian camps and conference centers; providing vision to engage in long-range planning, expansion, and corporate strategic planning that incorporate the policies, goals and aspirations of The Firs Board of Directors, staff and constituents; and providing community leadership to build understanding about the nature and function of the organization, instilling local support and confidence in it.

Primary Attributes

- Serve as The Firs' visionary and strategic thinker, to anticipate and analyze societal and field trends in camps and conference centers, and to work with the board and staff to develop a process to create, implement, monitor a strategic and tactical plan to position the organization to thrive and grow annually.
- Manage (overseeing a CFO) an annual budget including developing operating budgets that reflect the strategic goals and growth of the organization; and manage all fiscal matters with integrity and accuracy. Operating in full compliance to all financial and legal regulations for nonprofit organizations, keeping the Board fully informed on all aspects of operational and financial affairs including legal, regulatory, or fiscal policies/issues as well as ensuring The Firs operates in a manner that protects its government non-profit status.
- Serving as the chief spokesperson at home and British Columbia, be an effective advocate for the organization, faithfully and effectively communicate the mission, programs and services to all constituents (staff, council, board, donors, volunteers, and user-groups); strengthen existing and forge new relationships/partnerships with churches, pertinent para-church ministries, CCCA colleagues, and schools/colleges. As 'salt and light', increase profile and awareness of the organization through networking with community organizations within the geographical regions The Firs serves. Provide Christ-centered and God-honoring leadership and lifestyle in overseeing all of The Firs activities, ensuring the organization is faithful and committed to openly communicating the Gospel. Model and encourage servant leadership among staff and constituents, while ensuring the culture of the organization reflects and practices The Firs mission, vision, values and beliefs.

Desired Skills, Characteristics and Competencies

- Is personally passionate about, and fully committed to fulfillment of the Great Commandment, and Great Commission as quoted by Jesus Christ. Is a faithful and committed student of the Bible, evangelism and capable of speaking and teaching effectively to all age groups and constituents.
- A keen interest, genuine passion for, and deep personal commitment to the ministry of The Firs.
- The capacity to facilitate visionary thinking and to articulate a clear, collective vision that will motivate and inspire the staff, council and board.
- Marketing, public relations, and fundraising experience with the ability to engage a wide range of stakeholders and cultures.
- The commitment and capacity to respect and support a board that is active and deeply engaged in its role as a fiduciary steward and strategic institutional asset.
- The ability to honor the past without being inhibited by it.

Key Job Accountabilities

- Lead the staff in developing and embracing The Firs ministry vision. Encourage spiritual growth and continuing self-improvement of all Firs staff to ensure adherence to The Firs' Doctrinal Statement and core values in the delivery of its programs, as well as to support the continued transformation of lives among guests and staff members.
- Initiate strategic planning for program and facility developments of The Firs in response to changes in culture and emerging opportunities by working in direct consultation with The Firs executive team and Board of Directors.
- Maintain and develop positive relationships with members of the Board of Directors, trustees, staff, constituents, donors, conference speakers, community members, external camp and conference directors, and government officials for the purpose of gaining and maintaining support and confidence in the ministry of The Firs.
- Foster an ongoing vision for reaching next generations for Christ and champion the need for creative missional initiatives.
- Prepare and submit comprehensive written reports for and attend all Board of Director meetings; be available to meet with the Trustees when requested by the Board Chair.
- Develop fraternal relations with national and international evangelical organizations whose purposes are similar to The Firs.

Key Spiritual Personal Characteristics

- Known as an inspired, Spirit-led leader who places significant dependence on prayer.
- Demonstrates an authentic, vibrant, growing and mature walk with Christ in both personal and professional relationships.
- Is recognized as a person of moral integrity; a person above reproach; having a consistent, integrated scripturally based lifestyle.
- A servant leader who has a collaborative style knowing the balance between appropriate process and decisiveness.

Key Qualifications

- BA required minimum, Master's degree preferred (Religion, Theology, Christian Education, Leadership, M.Ed., MBA or related).
- Minimum 5-10 years' experience serving as an executive leader in an organization with a significant number of full-time staff and budget of at least 4M.
- Measurable experience of having led an organization to the next stage and levels of growth. Ideally, this could be from a Christian non-profit organization (i.e. camping, church or para church ministry, education, etc.) or secular non-profit at the national, regional or local level as well as someone with strong faith-based lay leadership coming from the for-profit world, perhaps wanting to move from "*success to significance*."
- Experience in generating revenue (both earned and contributed income) for an organization as either a volunteer or a professional.
- Possesses proven organizational leadership and management abilities for developing and implementing vision and strategy coupled with excellent team leadership skills.
- Solid grasp of the Bible and the ability to convey its message through various venues both within The Firs organization and broader constituency.
- Produces contagious enthusiasm, inspires others in 'up front' situations, able to lead groups of all sizes from small staff meetings to large public services and gatherings.
- Possesses entrepreneurial business acumen consistent with the general requirements of an Executive Director and able to give guidance to the business sides of the organization.
- Politically astute and decisive, particularly in crisis situations; patient, thoughtful and Christ-like with decisions that require more processing time.
- Works easily with leaders across denominational lines having had a breadth of experience in ministry organizations; has proven ability to also build healthy relationships with local community and governing officials.
- Is interested in and able to interpret the culture of our times from a biblical perspective, and translate those insights into the programs, culture and leadership of a Christian evangelical community such as The Firs.

Compensation

Salary will be commensurate with experience and qualifications. Compensation includes a comprehensive benefits package, onsite subsidized housing/utilities, relocation assistance.



Doctrinal Statement

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (2 Tim.3:16-7; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 2:13)

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)

We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. We believe in His personal, visible return to earth in righteousness and glory to consummate His salvation and His judgment. (Jn. 1:1-2; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

We believe that, because of the fall of humanity with the resulting sinful state and subsequent separation from God, there is the necessity of new birth, in salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone. (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-10; John 1:12)

We believe that God has called Christians to a life of sanctification through the Holy Spirit and to a life fully committed to the will of God in Christ. (1 Pet. 1:14-16; Titus 2:11-14)

We believe in the Christian church as the one universal body of Christ. Christ is the head of His church and calls God's redeemed people to be set apart for His purposes in the world. (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-30; I Peter 1:9-10)

We believe in the institution of marriage defined in Scripture as the covenantal union between one man and one woman. We believe that the Christian standard is faithfulness within that marriage covenant and abstinence outside of it. (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; Eph. 5:31-33)

We believe that every person is created in the image of God, that human sexuality reflects that image in terms of intimate love, communication and fellowship. We believe that God created humankind as two distinct sexes, male and female. (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-8)

The Search Process

If you know someone who has an interest and meets most of the experience and motivational requirements described in this profile, please feel free to suggest that person for consideration and/or forward this information.

Please request they forward their résumé to the contact below. Suggested names will be treated discreetly, and candidates should be assured that their inquiries will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Our client is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, sex, national origin, familial status, veteran status, or physical handicap. However, by the nature of this organization and its purposes, it does limit its hiring to people whose beliefs, theology and lifestyle are consistent with The Firs Statement of Belief (see addendum).

Ardent fully respects the need for confidentiality of information supplied by interested parties and assures them that their backgrounds and interests will not be discussed with anyone, including the The Firs without their prior consent, nor will reference contacts be made until mutual interest has been established.

Ardent Search Company (an affiliate of The Dingman Company, Inc.) is a retained executive search firm devoted exclusively to serving our clients in matters of executive selection. We are a generalist firm that has served business and non-profits worldwide since 1979.

For further information on this position, please contact

Tim Bernstein, President
Ardent Search Company
tim@ardentsearchco.com
Phone: 805-778-1777 ext. 14
Fax: 805-457-3963
www.ardentsearchco.com

