

COME TO ME, ALL WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY  
LADEN, AND **I WILL GIVE YOU REST.**  
MATTHEW 11:28 (ESV)

# Libre

*cultivating pastoral resilience*



*libreretreats.org*





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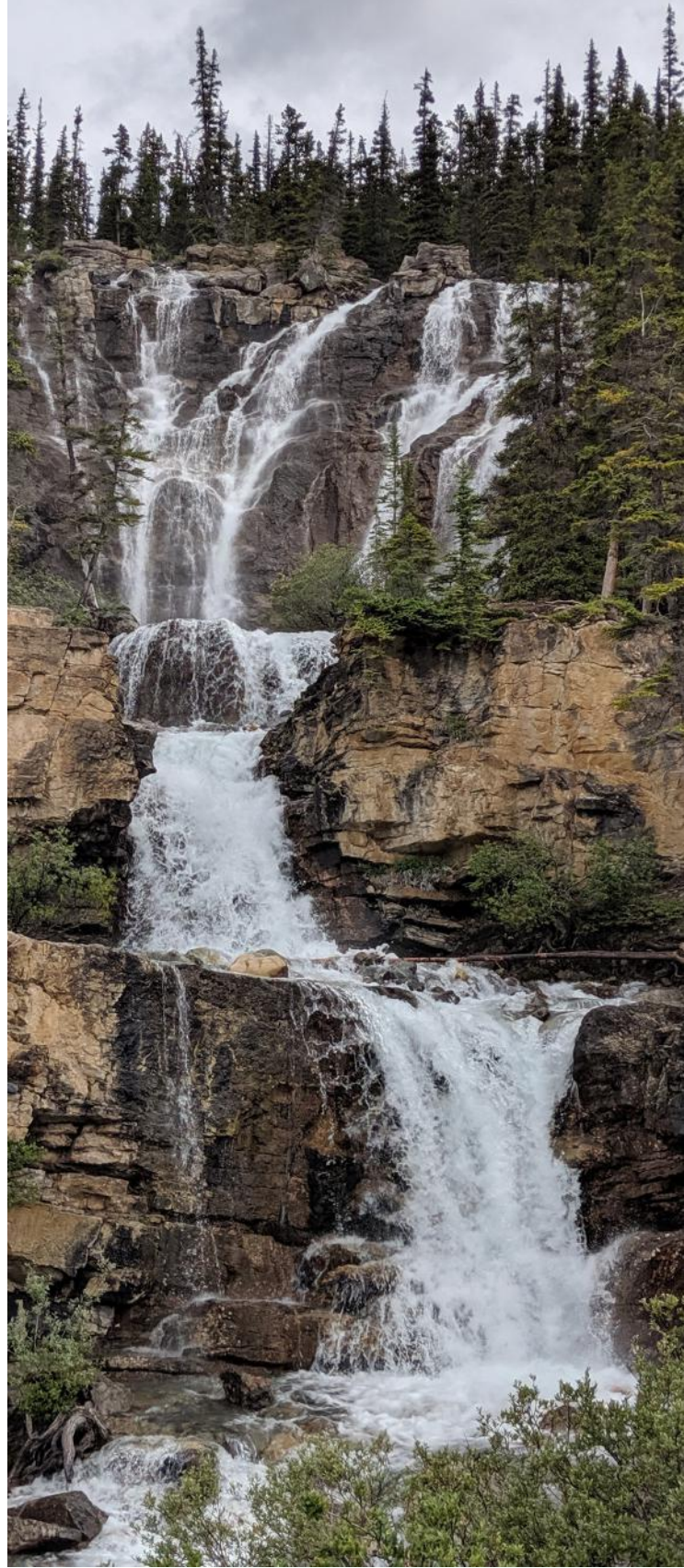
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## A NOTE FROM BRAD

Thank you for taking time to learn about our new venture! Jena-Marie and I are so thankful that God has richly blessed us with family, friends, and neighbors like you. In one sense this new journey began last summer while we were on sabbatical, in another sense this is the culmination of what God has been doing in our lives for over a decade.

In this next season of life and ministry I will be stepping out of pastoral ministry and stepping into the role of Executive Director with Libre Retreats. I have created this digital flipbook to explain how God led us in this new direction and what Libre Retreats hopes to accomplish by God's grace.

My prayer is that as you read the stories and look at the pictures, that God would use this tool to stir your heart as He has ours. I hope that you will have understanding of what we are doing and I pray that you might come alongside of us as a champion in this new work.

*Bradley A. O'Brien*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
LIBRE RETREATS



## **What Is Libre Retreats?**

Libre Retreats is a nonprofit Christian ministry that serves churches and their pastors. Libre provides—without cost to pastors—places of retreat for weary pastors and their families. Libre offers places where they can find spiritual refreshment and encouragement for their souls as well as physical rest for their bodies before being sent back into the battle of daily ministry.

## **Why Am I Joining Libre Retreats?**

Through my own journey of weariness and burnout as a pastor, I know the importance and the desperate need for pastors to find rest before they reach burnout. I know from first hand experience how important it is to come alongside these brothers on the frontlines to serve them and equip them to continue their calling. In the next few pages I share my own story and how the Lord has used my experience to prepare me for this new role in ministry.

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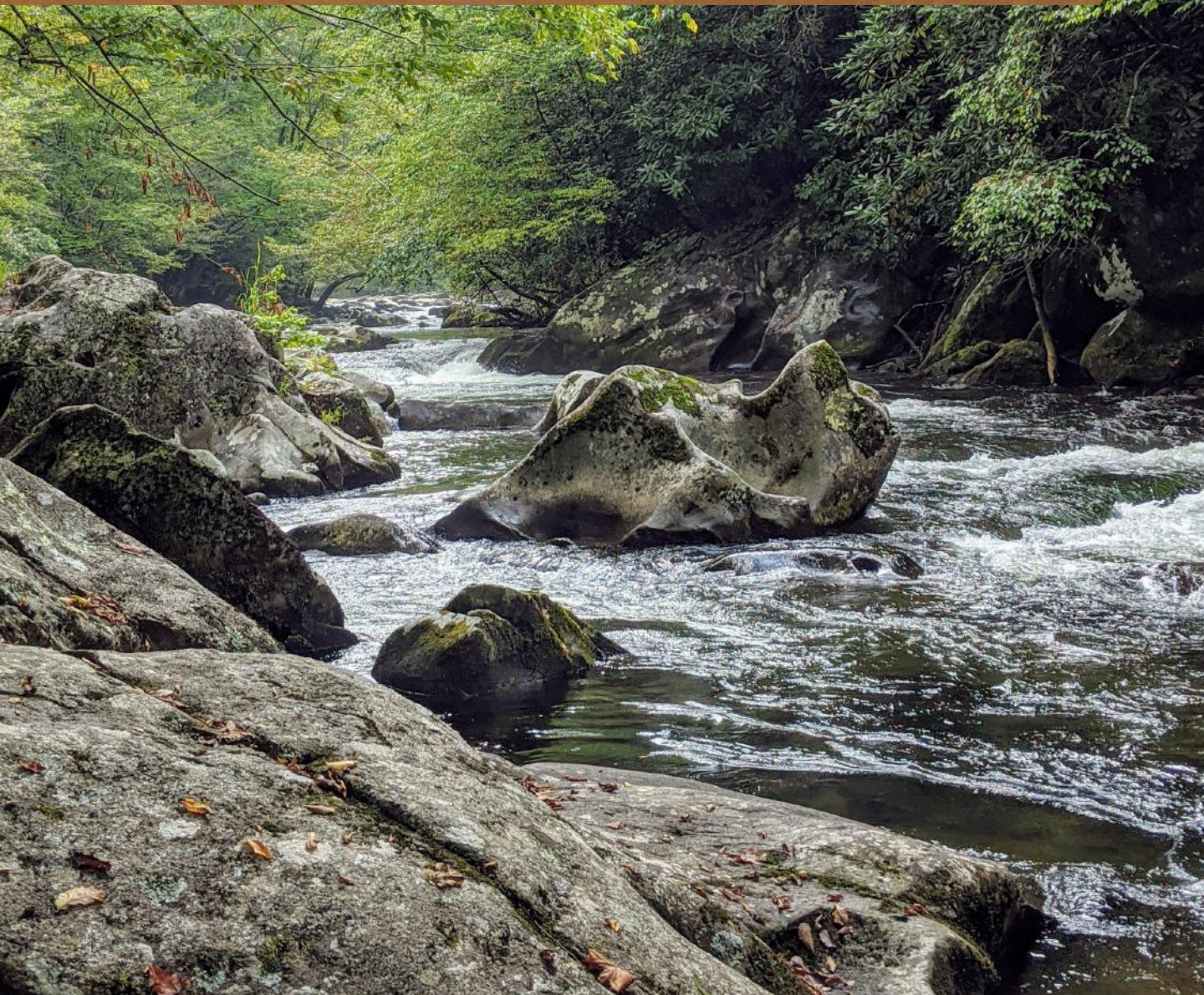






Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice. Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.

Isaiah 32:1–2 (ESV)







**BRYSON CITY, NC**

THIS IS WHERE WE LEARNED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE FROM  
OUR FRIENDS AT THE HEMLOCK. (HEMLOCKINN.COM)

## **SIGNS OF BURNOUT. MY JOURNEY.**

“What are your favorite memories from last year?” That was the simple question Jena-Marie asked me on my birthday in 2022. We were sitting outside of Baba’s, our favorite cafe, enjoying lunch. Sadly, I couldn’t remember. It wasn’t that I couldn’t rank my top 5. I just couldn’t recall or bring to mind any events. January to June of ‘22 had been one of, if not the, hardest seasons of my life.

In January, Jena-Marie shared that she had been experiencing headaches for 3 weeks. Which led to multiple doctor’s appointments and finally a MRI. By God’s grace the MRI was clear! The doctors told her that her headaches were a result of stress due to the compound trauma that originated in her family of origin.

What we didn’t realize at the time was that the compound trauma dating back to 2018 had taken a toll on me. Jena-Marie’s body expressed it’s response with headaches. But for me, it was simply a steady march to burnout. It wasn’t until June 9th that we realized how deeply burnout had crept into my life.



Pastors (and people) don’t just burnout. It isn’t like one day you are great and the next day you find yourself burnt out. It is a slow progression that leads to a place of inescapable weariness. Thankfully, we have a faithful friend who helped us process what we were experiencing and pointed us to some helpful resources.\*

By God’s grace, our church provided us with an 11-week sabbatical in the summer of 2023 and God used that extended time of rest in amazing ways. That sabbatical was the catalyst God used to help us understand our desires more clearly.

*\*[bradhambrick.com/burnout](http://bradhambrick.com/burnout)*

## WHAT DO YOU DESIRE? TAKING NOTICE OF WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART.

“What do you desire?” This was the first question our sabbatical coach, Jim, asked us after he realized that we were both refreshed. He invited us to turn our attention to what our hearts desired. He didn’t ask us to do more or work harder. He asked us to be curious about what we were feeling and what our hearts longed to see God to do.

It may seem like a simple question but if you are willing to engage it honestly, it can be difficult. Jena-Marie had been working on naming her desires with her therapist for a few months. I, however, really struggled to engage. If my heart is *“deceitful above all things, and desperately sick”* (Jer 17:9) then why would I allow my desires to be my guide?

Jim’s presence was such a gift! He gently and wisely corrected me. Then he invited me to consider how God had been working over the past 25 years to form my desires to be aligned with His. The next morning, Jena-Marie and I encountered Psalm 20:4 in our daily Bible reading: **“May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans.”** Maybe God would graciously use our desires to guide us and lead us onto a new path for His glory.

“God does not waste your pain,” was another comment that Jim reminded us of in this season. This was an additional catalyst for me to discover my desires. I realized that my desire was to steward the comfort that God had comforted us with (2 Cor 1:3-5) so that other weary pastors might be afforded an opportunity to move from weariness to wholeheartedness.



### LAKE GASTON (NC)

A PLACE THAT IS SPECIAL TO JENA-MARIE FROM HER TIME WORKING AT CAMP WILLOW RUN (CAMPWILLOWRUN.ORG). THIS PICTURE IS THE FRIENDS' HOME WHERE WE WERE STAYING WHEN JIM INVITED US TO BE CURIOUS ABOUT OUR DESIRES.





**COLLEGEDALE (TN)** IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE WE WERE ABLE TO SPEND A WEEKEND IN CHATTANOOGA WITH FRIENDS ON LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN. DURING THIS TIME, WE GOT TO SPEND A DAY WITH JIM AND HIS WIFE (JOY). PART OF THE DAY WAS SPENT WALKING HIS FAMILY'S FARM LAND. SO THANKFUL FOR THIS GIFT.

## THE POWER OF PRESENCE

"Friendship halves our troubles and doubles our joy." J.C. Ryle

During our sabbatical we were surprised by the way God used presence to restore and refresh us. We encountered many facets of presence during our sabbatical: slow and unhurried time in the presence of God, our uninterrupted presence together as a family, the presence of our extended family, and the presence of friends we had not seen in years.

However, the presence that proved to be one of God's sweetest gifts to us was the presence of our coach, Jim Cofield. God graciously connected us with Jim and provided space in Jim's calendar for us.

His presence in our lives during sabbatical felt more like an older brother than a coach or therapist. His empathy and attentiveness reminded us that we were not alone. That we were seen, loved, and valued not because of what we do but because of our identity in Christ.

At Libre, one of the ways we desire to cultivate pastoral resilience, in the lives of our pastors and their families, is by providing an empathetic presence to weary pastors.

**"Every modern pastor needs the presence and friendship of other pastors to thrive and persevere throughout the unique challenges of pastoral ministry."**

Haykin, Croft, and Carroll, *Pastoral Friendship: The Forgotten Piece of Persevering Ministry*



At **Libre**, we provide rest by connecting our pastors to destinations worthy of the sacrifices they make and the burdens they carry.



HEIGH TORR ESTATE (VA)

## THE POWER OF PLACE

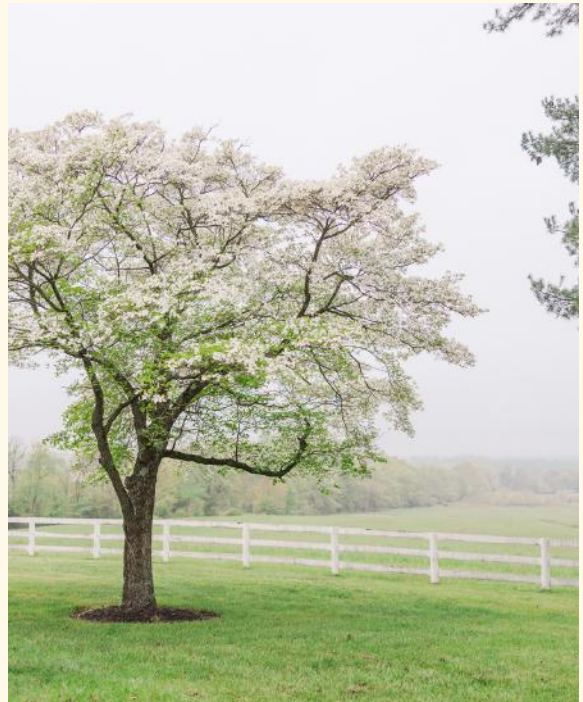
In addition to presence, God also used the places we stayed over the summer to restore our souls. As our congregation considered the possibility of a sabbatical we began to pray. We knew that we were not in a position to rest while staying in the church's parsonage in downtown Baltimore. Also, we knew that we could not possibly afford to rent a home for 11 weeks. It felt like an insurmountable obstacle. We prayed that God would provide a way because we could not do it on our own.

God answered our prayer and provided 76 of 77 nights of lodging as a gift! This was one of the most amazing and faith building experiences of our sabbatical. We stayed on farms, beaches, lakes, and in the mountains. We quickly realized how place fits into our search for rest.

At Libre we work to connect our pastors to places where they can enjoy rest. We curate a private list of luxury resorts, historic estates, distinctive properties, and 5-star short term rentals that set aside a percentage of their occupancy for our pastors. Libre then offers to provide for the basic operating costs of our partners so they don't lose revenue simply for doing good.

The picture above is the property that was the catalyst for our effort at Libre. The Heigh Torr is a 1780s estate in Northern Virginia. The team that stewards this property generates revenue by offering wedding weekend packages and then donates 20% of their occupancy to our pastors. ([heightorrestate.com](http://heightorrestate.com))





The Heigh Torr Estate sits on 150 acres of breathtaking land in Loudon County, VA. This premiere destination leaves our pastors in awe when they learn that their stay is a gift made possible by donations from our generous champions.



We are curating a one of a kind list of respite properties. We work hard to ensure that our pastors and our respite property providers all have a great experience.

One of the many ways you can join our effort as a champion is to **share this opportunity** with anyone you know who owns a property that might be interested in becoming a Libre respite partner. If you know someone, please email us and tell us about them. ([board.libre@gmail.com](mailto:board.libre@gmail.com))



Where is the next property to be added to our portfolio? What if it is yours? What if it is stewarded by someone you know?

Share your ideas with us!



## PASTORAL CRISIS

Barna Group has done substantial research into the current state of pastors. Their research in the area of pastor well-being can be viewed in the two volume work *The State of Pastors*. ([barna.com/stateofpastors](http://barna.com/stateofpastors))

**65%** of pastors surveyed report their well-being as “average” or “unhealthy”.

**59%** of pastors surveyed have experienced depression. This is up from 46% in 2015.

**56%** of pastors surveyed say ministry is difficult on their families.

**7%** of pastors surveyed under the age of 45 describe their well-being as flourishing.

**46%** of pastors surveyed under the age of 45 have considered quitting in the last year.

**52%** of pastors surveyed do not use any outside service for self-care.



Weariness is an overwhelming force that weighs heavily on pastors. Sadly, many suffer in isolation. At Libre we work to remove all possible obstacles that prevent pastors from having access to rest.

## **ENDORSEMENTS & ENCOURAGEMENT**

“We have reached an unprecedented time for pastors. The burnout rate is staggering. Pastors are quitting the ministry at an alarming rate. In my experience, the best, and most effective way to care for pastors during these challenging days are other pastors who understand how to pastor—pastors. In the 10+ years I have known Brad and watched his ministry, I believe without a doubt he is one of those pastors. This is why I am extremely excited that he is with Libre Retreats. Brad has this unique quality of empathy and wisdom that is a rare, but needed combination in the proper care of pastors. Brad and the Libre Retreats ministry is at the top of my list of places I will recommend for weary pastors to get the care and help they need.”

read it.

### **BRIAN CROFT - PRACTICAL SHEPHERDING**

“In a cultural moment when pastors are acutely overwhelmed, discouraged, and weary, we need to not only lament the problems, but present genuine solutions. Due to Brad's unique combination of experience and empathy, he is a genuine solution to the need of the day. I believe in him to empower pastors and their families to not merely survive, but thrive in their callings.”

### **BRYAN BARLEY - VOICE OF THE HEART CENTER**

"I cannot think of a more qualified or passionate individual to take on such an arduous endeavor of reviving weary pastors than Brad. His personal understanding of the problem set and his zeal for following the Lord's calling to find a remedy are simply unmatched. I have personally been under his mentorship for many years and Brad's gentle yet reaffirming insights have walked me through a host of challenges I've faced in my military career. His wisdom, natural empathy, and genuine optimism are without peer!"

### **LT. COL. JOHNNY DURAY- UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

"Brad's pastoral heart and humble boldness were evident from the get-go and did not let up throughout the whole time I was under his care. We've remained friends through the years, and I know him as someone always willing to lend an ear and extend encouragement and counsel as needed. As I've found myself in the middle of a messy pastoral search at my current church, Brad has blessed me with timely advice that has helped refresh my soul during trying times. God has gifted Brad with a patience for attentive listening coupled with the courage to speak the truth in love. I am happy to see him offer those gifts to the church at large and look forward to seeing what God does through him.”

### **DANIEL ACOSTA - MECHANICAL ENGINEER**



# BECOME A CHAMPION. JOIN US IN OUR EFFORT.

“Be assured, if you walk with Him and look to Him, and expect help from Him, He will never fail you.”  
George Mueller



## PRAY FOR US

- Add Libre and my family to your daily prayer list.
- Email us and we will add you to our prayer update.  
(board.libre@gmail.com)



## INVEST IN THE WORK

- Prayerfully consider if God is inviting you to invest in our efforts.
- If you desire to support our ministry of Libre financially, please us this link  
[https://bit.ly/libre\\_give](https://bit.ly/libre_give)
- If you would like to give by text please text **Libre** to  
**1-888-364-GIVE (4483)**
- If you would like to give an in-kind gift or if you would like to donate stock please email us.  
(board.libre@gmail.com)
- Libre Retreats is a tax exempt, 501(c)(3) Christian ministry. We will issue a tax deductible receipt for all qualifying gifts.



The Chapel at The Cove (Asheville, NC)

# BECOME A CHAMPION. JOIN US IN OUR EFFORT.



## TELL OTHERS ABOUT US

One easy way to help champion our cause is by sharing our ministry with others. God has given you a network of people who value your voice. Consider leveraging it to help us launch Libre.

- Tell your pastor about us! While you are talking to him, would you simply ask him how he is holding up? Send him the link to this flipbook.
- Tell your friends who own rental property. Send them the link to this flipbook. Go one step further and tell us about them. (board.libre@gmail.com)
- Tell your friends who invest in redemptive efforts like Libre. Send them the link to this flipbook. Also, make a connection for us via email. (board.libre@gmail.com)
- Tell your church leaders. We want to help churches create environments where pastors can thrive not simply survive. We are available for consulting and coaching.





CO-FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

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CO-FOUNDER & CHAIR OF  
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BOARD MEMBER

**DAN MACKETT**

BOARD MEMBER

**KEVIN ROGERS**

BOARD MEMBER

**KESI STRIBLING**

LEGAL CONSULTANT

**DEREK GAUBATZ**





Great Smoky Mountains (TN)



**LIBRE RETREATS**  
*FUNDRAISING FLIPBOOK*  
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We will issue a tax deductible receipt for all qualifying gifts.*