

Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers
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NEWS RELEASE

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HEADLINE: ECCC Hosts 19th Annual Conference with Presiding Bishop as Keynote

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori heard first hand both the good news and challenges about the current health of the over 100 camps and conference centers in the Episcopal Church. Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori served as keynote speaker at the 19th Annual Conference of the Episcopal Camp and Conference Centers (ECCC) at Duncan M. Gray Center in the Diocese of Mississippi.

Directors and Board of Directors of Episcopal Centers cited the half billion dollar resource for the church that the centers represented. Although 6 new centers have been created since 2000, including Barbara Harris Center in the Diocese of Massachusetts, twelve others have closed.

"The church simply cannot afford to lose these valuable resources" said The Rev. Jack Andersen, long time advocate for this ministry.

The goals of the ECCC are articulated as:

- **Nurturing professional growth** and development of current and future leaders
- **Fostering excellence** in the operation and services of member centers
- **Strengthening the network** of communication, collegiality, and support among leaders of centers
- **Securing faithful financial resources** to sustain and expand the ministry of ECCC
- **Advocating for camp and conference ministry within the wider Church.**

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ECCC will be forwarding a resolution to the upcoming General Convention that funds be restored to the Episcopal Church budget for Camping Ministry. Part of this effort is to strengthen the link between Youth Ministry and Camp Ministry because Episcopal summer camps in the United States provide nurture to over 300,000 youngsters each year.

The Rev. Brian Prior, Vice-President of the House of Deputies and a former camper and camp director, put it best when he said, "right now camp ministry is not on the radar screen at the National level. The work of the ECCC can help the wider church understand that over half of the clergy and lay leadership of the church got their start in camp ministry."

A recent Gallup survey found that over eighty-five percent of church-goers established the foundation of their faith before the age of 18. Thus, the work of camp ministry, as well as the wide-ranging resources of conference and retreat facilities, enable the Church to do its primary work of "changing lives." "Improving the quality of these church resources and strengthening the network of center directors" is the ongoing goal of ECCC according to Peter Bergstrom, ECCC's Executive Director.

By providing experienced consulting services to centers, ECCC brings quality across the spectrum of camps and conference centers. Rufus Miller, Board President of ECCC said the organization and affiliated bishops will present ceremonial walking sticks to each bishop at General Convention who has walked the extra mile to further the work of camp and conference ministry in his or her Diocese.

The mission of Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers, Inc. is to sustain and enhance the ministry of all camps and conference centers of the Episcopal Church.

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