

Camping Presentation – 2007 Convention

Mike Stone and I, as part of the Triangle Lake Task Force, took the task of looking at the other mainline Protestant denomination's camping programs. Five denominations were selected, and meetings were held jointly and individually with each.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, American Baptists and United Church of Christ each operated one camp in Oregon, and they all were struggling. All had the same issues as did we, and all were in some phase of self-evaluation.

The Presbyterian Church had already gotten out of their camps by 1980, and had contracted with the Methodists for camp space.

About the time we were losing hope, we visited the United Methodists. Here we found a thriving program.

- 1) 4 camps in Oregon and a great conference center.
- 2) A wide variety of programs at each camp, many of which had been beyond our capability to offer at Triangle Lake.
- 3) A professional camping staff of three in Portland that ran camping and retreat program and facilities.
- 4) A program that operated in the black.

And there was a huge additional plus: they were very willing to have us join with them to enhance camping opportunities in the spirit of ecumenical strength.

Seizing this opportunity, our Diocese has entered into agreements with them on both program and properties. Those agreements, I believe, will be posted on the WEB site. We will immediately hire a Camping Coordinator and put together an Outdoor Ministry Team. In addition, we will be appointing volunteers, both lay and clergy, to serve on each of the Methodist camp and policy making committees. For the many Episcopalians that support camping, this will be an excellent opportunity to contribute, and I encourage you to do so..

You will find them to be comprehensive, long-term, and to provide us maximum flexibility. We have the ability to do our own programs, as do the Presbyterians, or to do programs jointly with the Methodists.

For those not familiar with their camps, the two largest are year-round camps at Suttle Lake near Sisters and Magruder on the Oregon coast at Rockaway. Camp Latgawa is just north of Medford. Wallowa Lake is in northeastern Oregon next to the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area and is a horse camp.

The Methodist camping program is not just for children. Their programs include adults, an example

being their grancamps for grandparents and grandchildren – no parents allowed.

The breakout session tomorrow afternoon on camping will be a good opportunity to find out more. I encourage you to participate. Our challenge as Episcopalians is to educate ourselves and our churches about the programs that will now exist and to seize the opportunities they present.