

## I. Outline of the ministry and the need that it addresses

This ministry aims to create pathways to raise up diverse leaders at Episcopal camps and conference centers.

Episcopal retreat sites and programs – collectively Episcopal Camps & Conference Centers (ECCC) – serve incredibly diverse audiences through summer camp, retreats, conferences, outdoor education, and teambuilding programs. This diversity is largely not represented on staffs, particularly in senior leadership. To better serve our audiences and reflect our communities, this project will:

- 1) Train, support, and encourage centers to offer programs that embrace economic, racial, and identity diversity;
- 2) Expand resources for supporting diversity in hiring, training, and long-term staffing.

Existing research, tools, best practices, and programs will be distilled into Episcopal camping and retreat context and language; training and education resources will be created and shared in a public report, and through ECCC's existing Annual Conference, 2-4 continuing education workshops each year, website (which curates and hosts Members Only resources, like policies and salary information), and new webinars.

Your diversity is not my diversity. I am not proposing one solution across all communities, camps or centers, but translating specific lessons from specific communities into broader considerations that serve many.

Recently, we have learned essential lessons from specific experiences at ECCC centers:

- *Consider gender identity: How might your registration form be alienating populations?*
- *Consider immigration status: Do campers have to go through any checkpoints to get to camp? How might that feel for parents and campers?*
- *Consider cultural differences in family structure: Are your age-based programs off-putting to tight-knit families?*
- *Consider language: What do refugees think when you call your program, "camp"?*

I am confident there are hundreds of lessons out there in the diverse communities and settings of ECCC camping and retreat programs.

This project will help ECCC centers agilely and intentionally serve populations in their communities by:

- 1) Identifying unintentional and intentional barriers to program participation.
  - a. Partner with Latino/Hispanic, Black, and Indigenous Ministries to ask their communities: *What have you heard about your diocesan camp or center? Tell me more about that, including awareness, feeling accepted, and suggestions.*
  - b. Translate existing data into an Episcopal context: We know that Asians are projected to surpass Hispanics as the largest immigrant group in the United States by 2065.<sup>1</sup> How can our centers thoughtfully prepare?
- 2) Support innovative programming: To meet diverse audience needs, camps can rethink how/where they do both camp and retreat program.

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, 2015. "Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065: Views of Immigration's Impact on U.S. Society Mixed." Washington, D.C.: September.

- a. Identify what's being done across the network and by ecumenical and secular partners (For example: Diocese of Eastern Oregon's racial reconciliation summer camp curriculum).
- b. Visit 4-5 geographically and program-diverse sites for in-depth interviews and resource documentation; share program, communication, and pricing models.

**To better reflect our communities through leadership**, this project will:

- 1) Create a baseline of ECCC now, to evaluate against in two, five, and ten years.
  - a. Ask the membership: Demographically, who do you serve, compared to what your staff looks like?
  - b. Ask campers: *Would you want to work at this camp when you grow up? Why or why not?* Across several camps, survey campers who did not go through their camp's counselor training program upon becoming eligible.
- 2) Develop training tools to build centers' cultural competencies, using research from Jacob Sorenson<sup>2</sup>, the American Camp Association<sup>3</sup>, and University Kansas's Community Toolbox<sup>4</sup>.
- 3) Develop Leadership Retreats for MBA/Non-Profit Students and network-wide Leadership Exchange for mid-level staff;
- 4) Compile comprehensive list of job boards and fairs;
- 5) Establish partnerships with Episcopal Service Corps and Forma;
- 6) Based on information gathered from surveys and interviews, rebrand the camp director job to attract a more diverse talent pool to this professional, creative, mission-driven work.
- 7) Develop colleague groups, like Women in Camping Leadership, to support growing diverse leadership.

This intentionality must be continuous, supported by anti-bias/anti-racism trainings annually at the conference – and at smaller gatherings, including board meetings – and include language to hold one another accountable and avoid one-story-fits-all tokenism.

This project could expand ECCC's role in empowering diversity within the Episcopal Church, potentially into a grant-making or fellowship-offering organization.

## **II. How this ministry develops your own leadership capabilities and the leadership capabilities of people at the congregational and/or community level**

This ministry will develop my facilitation, creative thinking, and program development skills, and also demonstrate the value of developing those skills to others. The opportunity for this fellowship has already changed how I use language, choosing words that both mean something and affirm others. That core skill I will carry with me, and pass on implicitly and explicitly.

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<sup>2</sup> Sorenson, Jacob, "A Theological Playground: Christian Summer Camp in Theological Perspective" (2016). *Doctor of Philosophy Theses*. 4.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/research/emerging-issues>

<sup>4</sup> <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-organizations/main>

Through the Eco-Justice Immersion Experience and Building the Continuum, I brought stories, learnings, and ideas to Camp Stevens that inspired our community to value the Episcopal Church for opportunities in professional development and travel, and for caring deeply about social justice, and relationship-building. This fellowship will expand on those stories and my reach for sharing them.

I also believe supporting a lay communicator sends a strong message to others in the pews that their ideas for transformation in the church are both welcome and needed.

### **III. How the wider Church will benefit from this ministry**

Leadership in camping ministry is leadership in the church. Our camps and centers engage with tens of thousands of visitors each year – some Episcopalian, some not – demonstrating the church’s capacity for and commitment to welcome and transformation. Furthermore, research shows those who attended camp as youth were over three times more likely to remain religiously affiliated five years later than peers who did not attend.<sup>5</sup>

Diverse leadership puts a vibrant church face forward. More importantly, diversity can inspire, challenge, and empower visitors to fight assumptions about those who are different, and cause a black/queer/Latino/take-your-pick camper to realize the limitlessness of how they can inspire and empower others.

### **IV. Examples of prior initiatives that you have led**

- 1) In 2011, I helped coordinate the Faith Formation Summit, a church-wide event that challenged 80 ordained and lay leaders to consider the greatest uncertainties facing the world. From those uncertainties – community-changing technology and interest in church – came future-planning workshops, where centers considered what opportunities, challenges and threats they might face in the next 5-20 years. I co-led and then led these workshops, which traveled to five conference centers, training over 30 directors and board members in creative thinking and programming.
- 2) After attending in 2011, I co-led the second Eco-Justice Immersion Experience, which convened 15-20 young adults to learn about and combat ecological and economic justice issues. At the time, I reflected, “as young Episcopalians, it’s exciting to be leading a charge that’s been called the civil rights movement of our generation.”<sup>6</sup>
- 3) As a board member of Episcopal Communicators, I co-chair the annual Polly Bond Awards, which recognize excellence in church communications.
- 4) Outside of my previous employment at Camp Stevens, I am volunteer co-lead of its Alumni Group, which reconnects former campers, counselors, and staff of the 65-year old organization with one another and its mission.

### **V. Identify project goals and how the effectiveness of the project will be measured**

The project goal is to create pathways to raise up diverse leaders at Episcopal camps and centers. I will measure effectiveness against baselines established this year.

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<sup>5</sup> Sorenson, Jacob, "A Theological Playground: Christian Summer Camp in Theological Perspective" (2016). *Doctor of Philosophy Theses*. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Graham-Wilcox, Ashley, “Spreading the Seeds of Eco-Justice” (2011). <https://blog.campstevens.org/2011/10/06/spreading-the-seeds-of-eco-justice/>

**Quantitative measurements include:**

1. Document increase in resources available to ECCC members and the church;
2. Measure participation in online and in-person trainings;
3. Capture use of pro-diversity curricula;
4. Document development of leadership or diversity-centered programs;
5. Pre/Post camper survey reflect increased interest in working at camp;
6. Pre/Post center survey indicate increased presence of diverse senior leadership.

**Qualitative measurements include:**

1. Perceived cultural competency within ECCC leadership and centers.

I grew up at St. John's Chrysostom Episcopal Church in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. For years, my parents managed restaurants and owned a catering business, which meant years of irregular hours and countless moves. In 1990, they decided that we were in one place for good, that St. John's was the school for my 9-year old sister (I would follow in two years.), and that church was for them.

Quickly, the congregation became our community. We youth grouped, pot-lucked, and served on every committee that asked. I led Vacation Bible School and my mom became the church secretary.

Somewhere in there, Camp Stevens found me. It was a fluke, really. My sister's friend's mom had gone to Camp Stevens, and we were invited to join. I don't remember much from that first year. But the next year, I went twice.

I loved the freedom, I loved being able to get as dirty as I wanted, and I loved how different it felt from home, school, and soccer.

I got hooked at sixteen, when I went through Counselor Training.

It's been eighteen years, and I have never found the words to articulate what Counselor Training (CT) did for me. It is no exaggeration to say it made me the person and professional I am today. CT taught me how to work collaboratively, respectfully disagree, and produce creativity, from others and myself. It changed everything.

Then, college happened. It was the turn of the millennium: The demand for rights of a marginalized population – at that time, it was gay rights – had become mainstream, there was a contentious election, and people were mad. (This may sound familiar.) Certain that I was smarter, kinder, and more open-minded than anyone else, the church lost me.

The one church thread I held onto was Camp Stevens. Those friendships, I maintained, and those Counselor Training skills, I used every day. Like many who have been camp counselors, I expected I would reminisce on teenage poolside days forever – but not much else.

That changed on September 15, 2007. I was living in Boston, as I had been since college: My Methodist roommate occasionally got me to church, but I had never found a home.

That day, a group of teenagers from the town nearest Camp Stevens trespassed to build a campfire in front of one of camp's landmarks: An old gold mine. They didn't properly put it out. The wind shifted.

That day, Camp Stevens lost over a dozen buildings, and nearly a hundred acres of forest.

That day, I was called back to the Episcopal Church. I sat on the square of Trinity Church with a friend who happened to be both nearest geographically and dearest from my camp history. Without smart phones to provide second-to-second updates, we held hands, worried, tried to joke, and cried.

A year or so later, my husband and I rented out our condo, quit our jobs, and moved cross-country to help Camp Stevens rebuild.

Eight years later, I am writing this application at Camp Stevens, which continues to shape and inspire me in unexpected, profound ways. I have worked as an Outdoor Educator, the Retreat Center Coordinator, and the Marketing Manager. Currently, we live at Camp Stevens and are raising our son here as my husband serves as Associate Director.

In 2011, I was asked to do part-time work for Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers (ECCC); in 2015, that became a half-time position – ideal for a new mom.

ECCC introduced me to a broader world of Episcopal camping and retreat ministry. Who knew that there are camps out there that operate for just one-week each year? That encourage competition? That have lakes you can swim in?!

Frankly, summer camp gets all the hype. (See essentially everything written above.) But I have had the pleasure and challenge of attending, leading, and hosting adult retreats for nearly the last decade, and I know that time away in a peaceful place, to encounter God within oneself, in nature, and through another, is as transformative as a week of summer camp.

Perhaps it's even more important to be coaxed out of our well-worn paths as adults than to have those experiences as children.

Which brings me here, to this fellowship application.

My 3-year old has recently gotten really into Berenstain Bears books. There's an endless churn from the library and a vintage stack at my parents' house; when we visit, we read every one, every day.

This isn't about my glamorous life, but about finding wisdom in unexpected places, like Mama Bear telling Sister in 'The Bad Habit' that habits are ruts: 'They're well-worn for a reason, but they're still worth breaking out of.'

When Episcopal Camps & Conference Centers developed a strategic plan in 2016, I saw a rut I hadn't known I was in, and outside of it, an opportunity to address obvious, compelling challenges and needs. The strategic plan calls on ECCC to:

- Model radical hospitality by training, supporting, and encouraging our centers to offer programs that embrace economic, racial, and identity diversity.
- Create pathways to raise up diverse leaders, both at our centers and within our organization.

ECCC is a vibrant organization, with engaged directors and camp staff eager to do more. It will take work from us on the inside of the camping world -- and support from this fellowship -- to roll the wheelbarrow out of the rut, onto open, fertile ground.

Camp and retreats are powerful experiences, which should be available to every person. Our centers need tools to offer those experiences to more people, and to reflect more intentionally their communities in program and staff. This fellowship is about creating resources for those who already serve as a front line of welcome to the Episcopal Church. Our centers are places of joy, peace, and transformation: A true reflection of what the Episcopal Church is to some, and could be to many more.