

## Report on the Ministry of Camp Jubilee

*By The Rev. Canon Ken Weldon, Camp Jubilee Executive Director*

I want to thank you all for the privilege of being able to address the convention this morning. I want to thank Bishop Edgar for his ongoing support of the ministry of Camp Jubilee. I also want to thank Justin Johnson, our Summer Camp Director. Justin has done the lion's share of the work preparing for this upcoming summer, and his faithfulness is an encouragement to me and to our team. He and his wife Katie, with their two young children, left St. Christopher to come with us to start a new summer camp. They did not know where they were going to live. They did not know how they were going to get paid. They simply stepped out in faith, and we owe them a great thank you for their faithfulness and courage. I am honored to serve alongside them.

During these past months, we have consistently been asked three questions:

- How are y'all doing?
- What are we doing?
- Where are we going?

The first is a pastoral question, and it shows the love and support that you all, as a diocese, have given us since the beginning of this new endeavor. The second question is an informational question. Folks are excited about what we are doing, want to be informed, and want to come alongside us in this new ministry. The third question is a question of vision for the long-term plans and hopes for Camp Jubilee.

### **Question #1 – How are y'all doing?**

We are doing great! I want to say thank you to all of you for that. The prayers, encouragement, and financial support we have received has been overwhelming. We have been blessed beyond measure. Congregations have come around us, individuals have come around us, and there are more stories than I can tell you today about how the Lord is moving in the hearts of his faithful people to support and equip Camp Jubilee. When I was called as the Executive Director of St. Christopher, my wife "Boo" and I were pretty sure we were going to lose it in the litigation. The Lord had put that on our hearts. We were nervous about accepting a call to a place and a ministry that we were pretty sure was going to be taken away from us. While talking and praying through this call with my friend Shay Gaillard, I shared with him our fears. He said to me, "Ken, the diocese knows how important this ministry is. And the diocese cares deeply for you and "Boo." The diocese will come around the ministry and the diocese will come around you all as well." Friends, we have experienced this in countless ways and we are grateful to you all for your ongoing support. The Lord is doing amazing things and the Holy Spirit is working mightily in the ministry of Camp Jubilee.

### **Question #2 – What are we doing?**

Camp Jubilee is up and running. We are about 70% full. We will be at Camp Kinard outside of Columbia for 6 weeks and we will be at Awanita Valley, north of Greenville, for two weeks this coming summer. Our summer staff has been hired and we have started our "Adopt a Staff Member" program where we invite congregations

and individuals to partner with us by making a \$3000 donation which will pay the salary of a summer staff member for the entire summer. Financial support continues to come in. We even received a \$10,000 gift to our vehicle fund from one of our congregations who lost their buildings. They are literally setting up chairs in a school for worship every Sunday and they are generously contributing to this ministry. It makes me cry every time I think about it. In short, Camp Jubilee is happening this upcoming summer and we are excited to see what the Lord will do next.

### **Question #3 – Where are we going?**

We are searching for our forever home and we are trusting that the Lord will lead us there and will show it to us. We have established a Vision Team of clergy and laypeople from around the diocese to dream big about what could be next for us.

The piece of scripture that the Lord has given us is Genesis 12:1-2.

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."*

We also believe this verse speaks to the parishes in our diocese who lost their buildings and to our diocese as a whole. The Lord is calling us to go to a place He will show us. The Lord said to Abram, *"Go to the land I will show you and I will bless you to be a blessing."* It is worth noting that the command is to "Go", now; it is a present tense verb. God commands Abram to "Go" presently, to the place that "I will show you" in the future. "Will show" is a future tense verb. As Christians, we are called to leave that which we know to go presently to the place that the Lord "will show us" in the future. We trust that the Lord already knows what and where this place is and we believe that if we "Go", the Lord will show it to us.

Friends, we are, each and every one of us at this Diocesan Convention, "going to the place the Lord will show us." In Psalm 119, the psalmist writes, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Walking with a lamp is not like walking in stadium lighting where we can see for hundreds of yards in front of us. Walking with a lamp only allows us to see the next few steps. But when we take those steps, the light always shows us farther. As long as we keep the lamp with us, we will never get to the end of the light no matter how far we walk and we will never be in darkness.

Brothers and sisters, Camp Jubilee is in the Lord's hands. Our parishes are in the Lord's hands. We are in the Lord's hands. Jesus is calling us, all of us, in different ways, to go out from what we've always done, to go out from what is comfortable, to go out from what we know, to leave our country, to leave our father's house, and to "go to the land that He will show us." Jesus is present with us. Jesus will go before us. Jesus will never forsake us. Beloved in Christ, we do not walk in the darkness.

Let's go Camping!