

## The Mission

The mission of the Religiously Affiliated Camps (RAC) is to inspire, equip, and support faith-based camp staff to nurture spiritual growth through the camp and retreat experience.

# RAC

Religiously Affiliated Camps Newsletter

From the RAC Council • Winter 2008

## RAC seeks to...

**R**elate issues, trends, and resources concerning spiritual formation to faith-based camp leaders.

**A**rticulate the faith-based voice to ACA on issues impacting programs.

**C**reate opportunities for faith-based networking that encourages dialogue, understanding, learning, and support.



## The POWER of the EXPERIENCE

Orlando 2009 • February 17-20

### American Camp Association® (ACA) 2009 National Conference in Orlando

**RAC Lunch** • Wednesday, February 18, 2009 • 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.  
Having Faith in the Power of Camp • **Michael Brandwein**

Join us as Michael takes his “Intentional Camp” concept and helps us explore specific ways we can use faith, spirituality, devotion, and religious study in the camp setting to further the development and growth of our campers and staff in exciting and lasting ways.

Michael Brandwein is an educator, author, and speaker. An international expert on camp, education, and working with young people, he has presented on six continents and in all fifty states. He is a best-selling author in the camp field with four books on staff training, leadership development, and supervision. He is a former national board member of the American Camp Association.

### **RAC Luncheon Sponsorship** • Church Mutual Insurance Company

We are grateful for the generous sponsorship of Church Mutual for this year’s luncheon.



**RAC Workshop** • Wednesday, February 18, 2009 • 11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
The Climate Project Presentation • **Jenny Phillips**

This workshop will provide an interfaith, information-packed presentation about the causes and impacts of climate change. Through credible, accessible science, engaging stories, and theological reflection, participants will learn essential information about the environmental crisis and how we can address it. Created by Al Gore, it is an up-to-date, faith-based version of the Gore’s film, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

The Rev. Jenny Phillips is founder of Creation Change, a United Methodist nonprofit organization that equips people of faith for dynamic response to our changing environment. Jenny develops resources and curriculum in collaboration with such organizations as the American Bible Society, ACA, and GreenFaith. She was trained by Al Gore in giving this presentation.

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## Religious Leaders on the Importance of Faith-Based Camps

For decades, camps have been a context for faith formation. One of the greatest challenges of religious camps is helping local congregations understand the importance of the camp setting for shaping the faith of children, youth, and adults. One of the definitive ways in which this significance can be communicated is through the telling of personal stories.

In this issue of the newsletter, we want to share the stories of the role camp has played in the lives of several religious leaders. These stories are just a sample of the many accounts that circulate within the tradition of your camp and other faith-based camps. We hope that they will inspire you to remember the importance of what you do. We hope you will invite your board members, former camps, religious leaders, and campers to share their stories in written form and then to circulate these stories among the congregations of your faith family as a reminder of the unique contribution camps make to formation of faith and the development of religious leadership.

We are grateful to those who agreed to share their stories with RAC members.

### **Camps and My Faith — Bruce Harvey**

Being a Christian educator for twenty-nine years, I can still point back to the great influence my church camp experience had on my faith development. Looking back it is amazing I ever went to camp a second year. I was the homesick kid the first year, making my friends and sister miserable as well. After my sixth grade year, I went to Camp Hat Creek for the first time. My mom prepared envelopes for me to write home each day and promised to write me every day. I had such a good experience in the outdoors cooking our meals, going on hikes, swimming, and much more, I never even thought

about writing. I was hooked on camp.

I continued to go to camp each summer for a week through the rest of middle school and high school. The Senior High work camps were especially significant as we prepared the camp for the rest of the summer camp season: lashing tables and benches, painting buildings, pulling cattails, and repositioning the swimming dock. At night we had studies and discussions on prayer, ethics, and other subjects. It helped answer some of my questions and to develop others that assisted in my faith development. I loved the atmosphere of camp so much that I even volunteered one week to wash dishes for the camp so I could just be there.

When I graduated from high school, I was hired as a camp counselor. Although I made some mistakes that first year, I was given a second chance. I continued to work as counselor through my college years, and I was the co-program director the summer I graduated from college. I met my future wife there, and we were married in the outdoor chapel.

I believe the small group camp model in which a hogan of boys and a hogan of girls lived together in the woods for a week was the key to the camp experience for me. It was an opportunity to share Bible stories and themes and allowed campers to put themes into practice as they prepared and ate meals together, did projects, went on hikes in the woods and in the river, and closed the day with vespers. Sharing the opportunity to work as a counselor with a partner to plan a week of activities for and with children provided a very practical side to my faith. Camp was my connection to the church during my college years and is the main reason I felt called to go to the Presbyterian School of Christian Education and to learn under the tutelage of Glenn Bannerman.

During my years as a Christian educator, I have continued to be involved with camps, serving on presbytery

camp committees/boards and leading retreats and conferences in the four presbyteries in which I served churches. Montreat Conference Center has become the place in my adult life that Camp Hat Creek was for me in my teenage and college years. I like working in the church but getting away in the outdoors to spend time with God, family, and friends is still a necessity for my continued faith development.

*Bruce Harvey, Jr., is the coordinator of Christian education at The Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He is a graduate of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia.*

### **Where Jewish Leaders Are Bred — Jerry Silverman**

Summer camp is a largely untapped resource for building religious identity and community. Much has been said about the American Jewish continuity crisis — so much that one might think that decline is inevitable and that there are no bright lights on the horizon that could reverse current trends. These people seem not to be aware of what is going on in one of the most promising sources of Jewish rejuvenation and renaissance — Jewish overnight camping.

There is no shortage of evidence as to the power of the Jewish camp experience. More than 65 percent of Jewish leaders attended a nonprofit Jewish sleep-away camp and continue to support the Jewish ideals that camp represents. In almost every community, former Jewish campers are the rabbis and cantors, federation executives and JCC leaders, day school principals and Hillel directors, carrying the torch to new generations of Jews.

Jewish camps not only provide all the unmatched and formative experiences associated with camp, but they also offer campers, counselors, and their parents positive frameworks within which Judaism is celebrated and compelling communities are built. Jewish camps also provide leadership



training in the role modeling of Jewish values for more than 10,000 college students annually.

Jewish camps build Jewish identity through a wide range of experiences, including informal opportunities to “live Jewishly.” By their very nature, Jewish camps integrate fun and challenges with serious Jewish learning. They also provide lifelong social and professional networks and opportunities to practice *tikkun olam* — making the world a better place — and invest time in causes that are important to the campers and counselors.

Today, Jewish nonprofit, sleep-away camps offer a wide range of options and facilities. The Foundation for Jewish Camping provides expertise for 120 such camps across the U.S. Specialty camps are Wintering up with programs that integrate both a Jewish and an Israeli theme, while focusing on

the performing arts, sports, and other topics of interest to young Jews.

Nothing exemplifies the integration of the Israel experience into camp more than the *shlichim*, the 2,000 Israeli counselors who come to the United States annually to work in these camps, inspiring campers and providing a lasting connection to Israel.

Jewish camps are in their ascendancy as philanthropic organizations and individuals in North America have begun to realize the critical importance of Jewish camping.

*Jerry Silverman is the executive director of the Foundation for Jewish Camping. Visit the Web site at [www.jewishcamp.org](http://www.jewishcamp.org).*

#### **Divine Intersections — Rev. Karen Yee**

Only the gospel of Luke tells a story about an intersection (Luke 7:11-17)

between Jesus and the funeral procession for a widow’s only son. Picture these two very different processions approaching the gate. The first procession is filled with sadness, despair, helplessness, mourning, loss, and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness as they follow a lifeless body. The other procession is filled with laughter, excitement, expectations, and a renewed sense of hope and life. This second procession is following Jesus and reminds us that who we follow makes all the difference. The widow had lost everything. She like some of us found herself at the end of the line with no other option in sight – until her life intersected with the unexpected presence and compassion of Jesus, the Lord of life and the source of hope.

Life and death intersected at the gate and resurrection happened. When God intersects with our lives there is

transformation. Death no longer has power. There is nothing on earth that Christ's power cannot overcome. Jesus is greater than the power of death and the power of hopelessness. What is amazing about this event is that the widow never asked for a miracle. She never expected the miracle. Unlike others before her, she did not beg Jesus to give her back her son. There was no intercession by others, no demonstration of faith. The widow didn't come to see Jesus. In fact, we don't even know if she knew who he was! However, because of Christ's compassion, grace, and power, when her life intersected with Jesus — everything changed.

Christian camps are holy places, places where divine intersections occur all the time. Those who attend camps go for many different reasons. Some are looking for fun and relaxation; some go because they want to meet new friends, to get away from home, work, or their stressful routine. There are probably some who are there because they have to be, because someone made them go. Like the widow, they weren't looking for anything special, but when their lives intersect with Jesus, transformation happens. God is waiting to meet us all at the gate — to give us all a hope and a future. God has the power and authority to make all things new — from death to resurrection.

Redwood Glen Baptist Camp is a place where God has intersected in my life. I have been coming to Redwood Glen since 1976. I remember standing

on the deck outside Smith Hall, looking out at the cross; stars filled the night sky. I don't remember exactly what the program had been about that day, but in the stillness of the night, I knew without a doubt that Jesus was real, his love was awesome, and I just couldn't get enough of him. A divine intersection occurred, and my life would never be the same again.

Over the years, Redwood Glen was the place where I could test out and discover the gifts and talents God has given me to serve others. It was out in the Chapel in the Woods where God once again surprised me and placed a call in my life to give up teaching and go into full-time ministry. And it was here around the campfire circle, that I knew that God had called me to leave my home church to go and serve at the First Baptist Church in Alameda. Without a doubt, God has used Redwood Glen to touch my life and so many other lives as well. Like so many other Christian camps, one can sense that it is holy ground. It is a place that has been sanctified to fulfill the glory of God. Even now, whenever I come, even if it's just for a Board meeting, I get a feeling of peace — knowing that in this special place, I have and will encounter Jesus—and when we do, we can't help but be transformed.

Everything changed when the two processions met at the gate. *"Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen among us!'" and "God has looked favorably*

*on his people!" This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.*" (Luke 7:16-17) The son was given life, the widow's hope was restored, and the two crowds became one. Tears turned to laughter, lament into shouts of praise, mourning into dancing, and all of them were filled with fear and awe at the glory of God. "God has looked favorably on his people" — a divine intersection occurred and it is occurring now — each time a person takes the time to visit a place like Redwood Glen.

*Rev. Karen Yee is the associate pastor at the First Baptist Church of Alameda, California.*

### **Camp and My Spiritual Formation — David Boyle**

When I think of how my spiritual growth relates to camp, I remember two experiences. First, from the age of nine, I attended a camp in the Georgia Mountains. Bible study and worship to promote commitment in Jesus Christ were the main reasons for this conference camp. The natural world was a setting for this continuation of Sunday School. Camps were a week long, regardless of camper age. However, the sponsoring conference was small enough that the same campers returned year after year so that there was an opportunity to establish relationships and to see people grow. I grew up feeling like a part of an extended community. This camp experience strengthened my personal faith and promoted a sense of communal identity. It also deeply reinforced the worldview of white folks in small town Georgia.

My second camp experience involved five summers as a counselor at Camp Hanover where the small group camp model was practiced with enthusiasm. The world had changed and attending a church college during the Vietnam War years had already expanded my world view. At Camp Hanover, camp was considered a high calling. Counselors were required to

**The RAC Council is pleased to announce that Jennifer Burch has been hired as the new, part-time, RAC management consultant beginning February 1, 2009. Jen will succeed Nancy Ferguson who has served as the RAC consultant for the past three years and is leaving to spend more time on writing projects.**

**Welcome, Jen! Thanks, Nancy!**

spend ten days of training before they saw the first camper. Safety training was rigorous and respect for people and their diversity was emphasized. There were African-American counselors and counselors from Europe and Asia. The natural world was not context but text. Worship and Bible study were integrated into group process by involving campers in the development of campfire and vespers worship times. Campers and counselors lived in coed “family” groups, passed most of the day outside, and slept in hogans or long houses open to the natural world. Lessons from nature and from the process of planning together often led to a thoughtful consideration of scriptures on resolving conflict, forgiveness, and acceptance of others.

This second camp experience involved the whole self: vigorous physical exertion, hiking, canoeing, swimming, and group processes as campers planned cookouts and canoe trips. Using camp equipment led to discussions of stewardship; learning to canoe on wild rivers while leaving little human imprint led to conversations about partnership with the Creator as opposed to using/abusing the natural world. Sometimes things went wrong: it stormed during a canoe trip, the food pack fell overboard, a canoe was destroyed in white water, someone got separated from the group and conditions were uncomfortable, campers irritable, bodies tired, stomachs hungry. However, this adversity gave openings for counselors and mature campers to model patience, mercy, and forgiveness. And things invariably got better. Everyone learned that we cannot only survive hardships but triumph and grow through them.

The small group experience has continued to affect my life. I still go back to camp for refresher experiences more than thirty-five years later. I am a more tolerant, loving, and sensitive person. My spirituality includes desire for justice for all people and a deep appreciation and care for the natural world. Community for me now means

## Call for Faith-Based Resources

Healthy Learning/ACA Bookstore/Coaches Choice — the primary producer of ACA generated-resources — is committed to creating a variety of resources for faith-based camps. They are currently recruiting projects and authors to contribute to their faith-based offerings. If you have an idea for a book or a project in the works for which you are seeking a publisher, you are invited to send a proposal to Healthy Learning/ACA Bookstore/Coaches Choice at: [info@healthylearning.com](mailto:info@healthylearning.com).

A proposal should include: a topic title, description of the content with brief outline, length of book, market for the book, completion date, and a short bio. Please check the faith-based books already being offered at the ACA bookstore webpage to see what other resources are needed and that you can provide.

concern for people and for the environment that nurtures us. I am a very different person due to my small group camp experiences from what I would have been if I had only known the first camp of my childhood.

*Dr. David Pat Boyle is professor of social work and dean of the School of Social Work at Dalton (GA) State College. Dr. Boyle is a graduate of Eckerd College, Indiana University, and the University of Georgia. In addition to his teaching, he is active in community ministries, especially with the frail elderly.*

## Resources for Camp Leaders

**New! Available in January 2009**

### *The Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats*

Author: Rachel Gilmore

Publisher: Judson Press

ISBN: 0-8170-1546-6

Cost: \$17.00

*The Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats* offers pastors, Christian educators, and lay leaders a comprehensive guide to the process of planning for a retreat and a resource for developing retreat programs. It includes rationale for holding retreats as well as the details of a planning process. The majority of the book

contains retreat designs for a variety of groups within the church such as women, youth, men, and families. Each program outline begins with a schedule and follows with detailed instruction for the retreat. The retreat schedules vary in length from one to three days.

Although created primarily for congregational leaders, this new resource can be a helpful addition to the libraries of camp leaders. Many congregations who come to your site for retreats need assistance in developing both plans and programs for their retreats. By making this book available or suggesting it to them, you can enrich their total retreat experience. You may want to consider listing this resource on your Web site as a way of assisting congregations in their planning process.

### **About the Editor**

*Nancy Ferguson is an outdoor ministry consultant who directs a day camp at Camp Hanover in Richmond, Virginia, edits the New Earth camp curriculum, and works with camp leaders in the area of program development. She is the author of several books on camp program leadership and relates to the RAC Council as a management consultant. You can visit her Web site at [www.BlueTreeResources.org](http://www.BlueTreeResources.org).*