

**THE EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
OF MILWAUKEE**

The Rt. Rev. Steven
Andrew Miller, D.D.,
Bishop

January 23, 2008

Dear Friends in Christ,

For the last 46 years the ministry of Camp Webb has been housed at our site in Wautoma. In my early days as your bishop, I heard the sentiment from many within the diocese that it was time to sell the Wautoma facility and explore new ways to provide a Christian camping experience. I also heard from many with deep ties to Camp Webb who had come to know that site as a special place and longed to preserve it.

For the past four years we have been engaged in an intentional process to determine what role our facility in Wautoma would have in our ministry of Christian formation. In 2004, we began a four-year process to discern the answer to this question. While it was clear that the diocesan budget would always have to provide a level of subsidy for such a program, the goal was to be able to reduce that subsidy to a reasonable level that would allow dollars from the diocesan budget to be allocated for additional Christian formation programs. Thus, the goal was set that the ministry would experience such growth in attendance and programming that at the end of four years, the camp's operation would be funded 50% by user fees, 34% by donations and 16% by the diocesan budget.

Despite a very concerted effort by the Camp Webb staff, the Board of Directors, and many faithful supporters, these goals have not been met and the camp has had to rely on a line of credit to operate each year. While it saddens me to say so, it is my strong feeling that to incur further debt to maintain a camping program at the current site would be poor stewardship, and something I cannot support.

In an attempt to fund a camping season for 2008 the Camp Webb Board, with the authorization of the Executive Council of the Diocese, conducted an emergency appeal to raise \$125,000 by December 15, 2007. Despite generous support from some in the diocese, the appeal fell well short of that goal. As a result, the Board and the Executive Council were forced to look at other options.

On Tuesday January 15, 2008 the Camp Webb Board gave serious consideration to three proposals for this year. Two of the plans provided an option for camping in 2008. They relied heavily on the need for higher amounts of financial donations and very significant volunteer staff support. Based on the history of giving to the camp over many years, the inability to extend further the line of credit, and the risk-exposure presented by the use of a high number of volunteer staff, the Board

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felt it could not recommend either of these options to the diocesan Executive Council.

With sorrow, the Board recommended that there be no camping program for 2008, and that the Executive Council begin to explore options for the Wautoma site, and that we look for new ways to encourage and support the development of a strong Christian formation program within the diocese, with an outdoor ministry as a significant component. This recommendation included closing the facility in such a way as to meet fully our insurance company's recommendations for reduced risk exposure, while still providing the greatest cost reduction for the coming year. The Board further encouraged the Executive Council to explore a way to offer an opportunity at the Wautoma site in 2008 to allow members of the diocese to give thanks for a place that has meant so much to so many.

On Thursday, January 17, 2008 the Executive Council, meeting to receive and review all three proposals, adopted the recommendation of the Camp Webb Board. At the same time, the Council strongly affirmed that the program at the Wautoma site has been a blessing to this diocese, and reaffirmed its commitment to outdoor ministry as part of its Christian formation program.

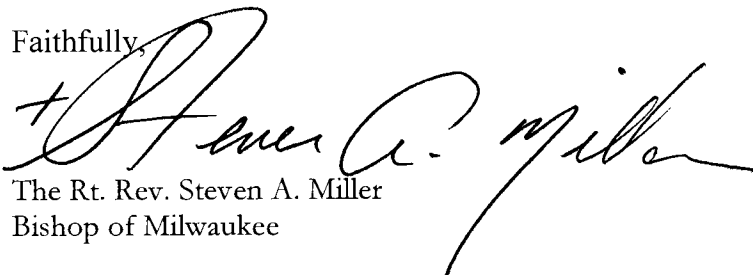
We will now begin a process of creating a new vision for Christian formation in this diocese, and the future role of a camping ministry in that program. I have created a task force to examine this issue. The task force members are eager to begin their work, and anticipate presenting a report to the Executive Council by June, 2008. I want to be clear that it will not be the responsibility of the task force to consider the disposition of the Wautoma property.

With the support of the Executive Council, I have also appointed a Wautoma Property Management Committee to be responsible for oversight of the property; attending to payment of bills, maintenance of the property and communication with the Office of the Bishop. The ultimate decision regarding the disposition of the Wautoma property will be made by the Executive Council, guided by qualified professionals.

What has become clear to me these past four years is that to put all our financial support for Christian formation into maintaining this facility for camping is not good stewardship. Both I, as your bishop, and the Executive Council, as the leadership body elected by the Diocesan Convention, continue to express a strong desire to explore all options related to the future of a Christian camping experience as part of our ministry of Christian formation.

At this time, we simply do not know what that will look like. Such exploration will take time to do prayerfully. It is this work that God now calls us as a diocese.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Steven A. Miller
Bishop of Milwaukee