

**Title:**           **Camping Ministry as a Priority for The United Church of Canada**

**Originating Body:**           Maritime Conference Christian Life and Growth Committee in cooperation with London Conference Camping and Outdoor Ministries Committee

**Maritime Conference Action:**       Transmit with concurrence

**Financial Implications:**           N/A

**Staffing Implications:**           N/A

**Proposal:**

Maritime Conference proposes that the 40<sup>th</sup> General Council:

Recognize Camping Ministry as one of the primary places for faith formation and affirm the vitality of this growing ministry by:

- 1) Establishing Camping Ministry as a priority for the church.
- 2) Continuing to support the National Camping Task Group with funding and staff time.
- 3) Continuing “Connections” National Camping Event
- 4) Providing print resources for faith development that relate to camping/faith formation that speak to children and youth today.
- 5) Providing ongoing financial support for camps facing replacement and repairs to existing facilities.
- 6) Providing funding for innovative and creative ways of connecting possibilities between camps and church communities.

**Background:**

Camps & Vacation Bible Schools have become the primary church structure where children learn about faith. (The week-after-week Sunday school has been augmented by short term intensive experiences.)

The United Church of Canada is the holder of significant tracts of land, dedicated to outdoor ministry in a time when this natural resource is disappearing.

Camps create intensive faith communities, connecting with others in community; engaging in a caring faith community in a time of increasing social isolation.

Camps are also reaching out to children who experience camps as their first and sometimes only experience of a faith community.

Camps are supporting and celebrating the passion of camp volunteers and staff so they can find new energy, vision and action to touch the hearts of all.

Camps need national strategies and connectors to support the uniqueness of each and the shared ministry of all.

The Church needs to support the vision of camping that resonates with the 21<sup>st</sup> century: its children and youth, and their experience of the world.

The United Church of Canada has approximately 76 Camping Ministries across Canada.

35 Camps reported in 2008:

- a total of 11,188 Campers attended camps
- Total number of Volunteers under the age of 18 – 296
- Total number of paid staff under the age of 18 – 233
- Total number of Volunteers over the age of 18 – 149
- Total number of Paid Staff over the age of 18 – 232