**Camp Horstick**

The Diocese of Eau Claire had 80 people this August at Camp Horstick. This week of youth camping is put together by Fr. Art Hancock and his staff at CrossWoods Camp near Delta, Wisconsin. In past years we have had an average of 25 to 30 campers and 5 to 10 adults supporting the campers.

At the 2016 Diocesan Convention we made a budgetary change. We as a Diocese decided to allow every young person who was a member of a parish to go to Camp Horstick for free. Those young people in parishes could also invite a friend, and that person could also go for free. The result was a doubling of attendance.

In 2017 we had 70 young people and 10 support adults for a total of 80 at Camp Horstick! The proposed budget for 2018 allows for us to continue this generous policy unheard of in other Episcopal Church Dioceses. Why did we do this?

We acted this way because we have learned that Christian Camping Ministry is the primary means that young people connect with Jesus Christ. Why?

1. They spend significant quality time focused on their faith. Rather than an hour on Sunday they are immersed in an unapologetically Christian environment from Sunday evening until Friday morning.
2. The young people are taught by adult counselors who are about 18-23. The youth see them as older peers rather than grown-ups. It is a feeling of being guided by an older sister or brother. As a result our youth connect with what these counselors are saying. What the counselors present as their own issues of faith and life connect with where the Campers are themselves.

Throughout the Diocese we comment upon the aging of our congregations. This initiative of inviting children to Church Camp for free is an act of evangelism that by God’s grace will one day bring younger people into parish life. Only God can make that happen, but we can do our share by providing age appropriate strategies. Camp Horstick is an important way for God to do his work! Please do what you can at the parish level to support this. Also, donations by parishes or individuals to help the Diocese are most appreciated.

 —Bishop Jay Lambert