

MOUNTAIN ECHOES

Episcopal Appalachian Ministries

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Special Article Reprint . . .

EAM at the Presiding Bishop's Summit on Domestic Poverty: . . . 'developing a healed community'

The Rev. Theresa Kelley, Vice President, and Interim Executive Director Michael Maloney represented EAM at the Presiding Bishop's Summit on Domestic Poverty. The 2-1/2 day event held in Scottsdale, Ariz., May 13-15 engaged representatives of 43 Episcopal organizations and ecumenical partners.

A place of refuge and healing

In her letter to invitees, Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori posed these questions: How can we help break the cycle of poverty? How can we become a place of refuge and healing for the most vulnerable members of our society? How might we be a prophetic voice for those who find themselves stuck in dead end situations?" "If we are going to do something about this," Jefferts Schori said, "we need to understand why some people seem less valued than others. Developing a healed community comes out of coming together to share the blessings we have gained as a whole as infinitely valuable children of God. The strategic question is how do we get there?"

Quest for a common language

The conference was given a justice orientation by staff and consultant preparation. The imbalance of power, the lack of the essentials of justice, and barriers to access were listed as conditions that had to be resolved to overcome poverty. Tensions arose during the conference over the language of justice vs. the language of charity. The EAM team helped forge a quest for a common language that recognized both concerns.



EAM representative The Rev. Theresa Kelley (left) presented a collection of Appalachian books to Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori at her Summit on Domestic Poverty in May.

"We are like Sisyphus pushing rocks up the mountain," said Jefferts Schori. "We need to go up and see why the mountain is falling apart." She specifically mentioned the needs of Appalachia in her remarks.

At the end of the two days of conversation, participants were divided into four discussion groups on vision, networking of resources, formation, and advocacy. EAM's Michael Maloney will serve on the vision task force, which will propose a plan to go to the House of Bishops and to the 2009 General Convention.

Staff responsibility for follow-up resides with the Rev. Christopher Johnson, who was introduced to the conference as the new Jubilee officer for the national church.