

Camp and Conference Centre Ministry Sunday, 2006

Why Celebrate Camp and Conference Centre Ministries?

Camps and retreats have long been defining experiences designed to encourage persons to hear, respond and develop as spiritual leaders called to inspire and lead others in lives of love. Camps and retreats have as part of their purpose the responsibility to help persons connect the learning and transformation at camp or on a retreat with new ways of being and living in the world when they return home. According to Presbyterian Panel, a demographic study conducted by the Presbyterian Church (USA), the most common setting for a singular spiritual growth experience is a camp, and the second is a retreat.

Have a Camp/Conference Sunday in your congregation!

Choose a Sunday early in the year, invite your local camp staff, board members or camp alumni to participate. Get brochures, displays, and offering envelopes. As Presbyterians and people of the Reformed faith, we are called to active ministry. Our camps and conference centres manifest that active ministry and nurture that calling. Use your Camp Sunday to

- celebrate the beauty of God's creation
- recognize the importance of going on a retreat
- honour relationships that are fostered through outdoor ministries
- raise awareness of the camp and conference programs in your area and across the PCC
- express gratitude and support for the outdoor ministries of presbyteries, congregations and synods
- show support and thanks for all the dedicated and talented people who serve at camps and conference centres
- give thanks for the work of the Holy Spirit in making disciples of Jesus Christ through camp and conference experiences.

Worship resources and other ideas are attached. The resources were adapted by staff of Gracefield Camp & Conference Centre from materials supplied by the Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association (PCCCA) for the PC(USA) camp/conference ministry Sunday, which was designated as January 22, 2006. Thanks to David Gill, president of the PCCCA and director of Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center, and Caroline Blakely, ministry intern, for sharing these ideas.

The PCCCA has a Canadian region, with representatives from two Presbyterian Church in Canada camps. Encourage representatives of your local camp and conference centre to join PCCCA to strengthen all our Canadian Presbyterian camp ministries. Learn more about PCCCA at www.pccca.net

Have a joyful celebration of one of our church's most important outreach and leader development ministries.

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Resources for Camp and Conference Centre Ministry Sunday, 2006

Call to Worship *Option #1 (Kumbayah)*

Leader: Someone's singing Lord

People: **Lord, come by here**

Leader: Someone's crying Lord

People: **Lord, come by here**

Leader: Someone's praying Lord.

People: **Lord, come by here**

All: **As we worship, Lord, Kum Ba Yah.**

OR

Call to Worship *Option #2 (From Proverbs 3: 19-20)*

Leader: The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;

People: **By understanding God established the heavens;**

Leader: By God's knowledge the deeps broke open;

People: **And the clouds drop down the dew.**

Hymn/Camp Song (see suggestions at the end)

Call to Confession

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when we come into the presence of God, we cannot help but realize how short we have fallen of the lives God has intended for us. We find that we sin in the things we do, and the things we leave undone. We find that we sin against God, neighbour, creation, and ourselves. Let us go to God to confess so that we may receive the grace of forgiveness.

Prayer of Confession

Leader: God, you have created this world and all that is within it.

People: **Too often we take it for granted.**

Leader: You have entrusted us with the stewardship of the bounty of the earth.

People: **Too often we have used the world's resources for our gain without thought of the consequences.**

Leader: You have given us the opportunity to serve.

People: **Too often we have chosen to be served.**

Leader: You have asked us to raise children in the path that leads to you.

People: **Too often our examples have led them astray and too seldom have we taught them of you.**

Leader: You call to us again and again, asking that we open our hearts to you.

People: **We confess that listening to your call is harder than we would like it to be.**

All: **Forgive us God. Enable your voice to drown out all others who compete for our attention. Remind us to take time for retreat, fellowship, sabbath and study. Help us to find those places where we can be still and know that you are God, and may that knowledge enliven us to go and lead lives worthy of your calling. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

The proof of God's amazing love is this: While we were sinners Christ was born for us, Christ lived for us, Christ worked for us, Christ suffered for us, Christ died for us, and Christ was raised for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation; the old has gone, and the new has come. Know that when we confess our sin, God hears us, God loves us, and God forgives us. In the name of Christ, we are forgiven!

Hymn/Camp Song

Children's Sermon

No "children's sermon" children at your church? Camp & Conference Ministry Sunday is the perfect time to have a children's sermon, even if you don't normally. Adapt the messages for your adults. They will appreciate the message, too!

Option 1: Going to Camp

Materials: Backpack, camp attire (hat, t-shirt, boots, etc.), camp brochure, "camp things" specific to your camp's programs, songbook, Bible.

Bible Passage: Genesis 1:1-2:3. The Story of Creation (you may use Bible Discovery #1, Peace Talks, New Earth Christian Resources for the Outdoors. This is the curriculum used by many North American camps. For more information, see page 7.)

Message: Being in God's Creation at Camp.

Person leading the children's sermon is dressed ready to go to camp. Camp hat, t-shirt, hiking boots, etc. with a backpack full of "camp things" (eg. archery bow and arrow, Bible, canoe paddle, dance shoes, craft supplies, musical instrument, songbook, etc.) Camp person is en route to camp, ready for a summer of fun, walks into sanctuary needing help finding camp. Asks children if they are at camp. Ask children how many have been there. Ask children: Can you help me find my way? It's a long way, so the camp person sits down to take a break and unpacks some of the "camp things" from the backpack. Ask children what they might need this for at camp...Go through several items. Bring out a song book and teach a camp song. The last item out of backpack is the Bible. Share the Bible passage. Talk with children about God's creation and everything on it. What better place to enjoy God's creation than at camp! Close with prayer.

Option 2: Want S'more?

Materials: Graham crackers (one whole cracker per child), Regular-sized marshmallows (two per child), Chocolate bars (1/4 per child), Foil squares

Bible Passage: Colossians 3:12-14

Message: God Melts (Binds) Us All Together.

Background

information: One of our favourite parts of camping is s'mores. It can even be said that s'mores are a part of our Presbyterian camping heritage since the Graham cracker was invented by Rev. Dr. Sylvester Graham, a Presbyterian minister. The world would have no s'mores without a Presbyterian!

Ask the group: What activities do you think are at camp?

What is your favourite part of going to camp/camping with your family?

What is the best food to have at camp?

What do you like to eat while you're camping? Maybe someone will mention it, or you can bring up "your favourite:" s'mores!

What are the ingredients in a s'more? (get them out as they say them).

Place the Graham crackers, chocolate and marshmallows out for the children. Have the children examine and describe each of the ingredients. 1. Graham Crackers: rough, light brown, holes, poky edges. 2.

Marshmallows: powdery, sticky, white, squooshy, no real edges. 3. Chocolate Bars: smooth, melty, dark brown, writing, broken edges. We are going to put all the ingredients together. Go through the process for making s'mores. Then, ask them to tell you how to make one as you follow their instructions and put them together. But it won't stay together. See? It falls apart.

We need something to hold it together. What?

How does a "camping" s'more stay together? Roasted marshmallow to stick it together.

How can we get our s'more to stick together here? If we put it in the oven and melt it then all these different ingredients will stick and taste good together.

Here is one that has already been in the oven. It worked! Either have enough made ahead of time for each child or have the children make one and take them home with directions, or have the children make one and have someone bake them so they are ready by the end of church or do a s'more bar after church for everyone to make one. (Note: Beware of possible food allergies in the group!)

How is a s'more like camp? Camp is like this s'more? A group of different people coming together to do all kinds of fun and zany activities, joined together by God's love.

Share the Bible passage. Close with prayer.
Maybe, Camp and Conference Sunday could become "S'mores Sunday" and you can make them every year!

Option 3: Aloha-Welcome and Hospitality (Bible Discovery #2, *Peace Talks*)

Materials: Leis, welcome mat, poster board or large piece of paper (write a large 'aloha' in the middle), markers or crayons (To make leis, string cut-out paper flowers on ribbon, separated by beads or short sections of drinking straws, so flowers don't bunch together.)

Bible Passage: Genesis 18:1-8 (Discovery #1, *Peace Talks*)

Message: God's Gift of Hospitality

Leader's

preparation: Think about how to adapt the explanation of "aloha" for your group of children. "Aloha" is a Hawaiian word that is used as a greeting on both arrival and departure. It means peace and emphasizes a welcoming spirit. It also has that sense of intimacy in face-to-face relationships - the breath of life that connects host and guest. When the word "aloha" is spoken, the barriers that separate strangers are broken down. In the Old Testament passage, the welcoming ritual of Hebrew hospitality involved creating a safe and holy space where strangers can become friends.

Presentation: Place the welcome mat out where the children will be sitting. Call the children forward. As the children come forward, welcome them by saying "Aloha, ____" (child's name) and putting a lei around their neck.

Ask the group: Where does "Aloha" come from? What does it mean?
When have you felt welcomed? How did you feel? (Safe? Special? Important?)
What did the people do who helped you to feel welcome?
When have you welcomed others?
What are some of the things you did to welcome others?
Share the Bible passage. (See above.)
What do Abraham and Sarah do to make the strangers feel welcome?

As they welcomed the strangers they invited God into their midst.

Hospitality is a gift from God!

How will you continue to share God's gift of hospitality with others?

Place the poster board in the middle of the children. Have each child trace their hand. On each finger have them write how they will share God's gift of hospitality with others. (This can be hung up in the church as a reminder.)

Remind the children that camp is a place where God's gift of hospitality is shared. Close with prayer.

Option 4: Canoe Journey

Materials: Imagination or canoe, paddles, and life jackets, or create a river in a small container with land, water winding through, and a boat for the water

Bible Passage: Psalm 139:1-5

Message: God Is With Us and Protects Us Every Turn of our Journey.

Ask the group: Have you ever been on a boat, canoe, kayak?

How did it feel?

Where were you going?

Get the children to use their imagination. Guide them through a journey on a river. (At this point you could have the children use their imagination or sit in the canoe, or watch as you take the boat along the river. Be animated! Make it exciting!)

What do you know about a river?

Does the water in a river stand still or move?

Does the river flow straight or curvy?

What do you think you would see while on a river?

Once the children have a good understanding of the river, compare this experience to their journey with God. Our journey with God is always moving forward. However, there are many bends in the river and sometimes even small channels that rejoin downstream. Each of these bends and channels are the choices that we make in our lives. Our journey is not a straight line. The hope is that we don't run into anything that's too dangerous. Each new set of rapids and each rock in our river helps to shape who we are. Throughout the whole journey we have our life jacket with us to protect us on our journey. Just like God is with us every step of the way. Share the Bible passage. Close with prayer.

Scripture Readings (See notes page 7)

Sermon (See notes page 7)

Hymn/Camp Song

Offering (Consider receiving a special offering to support your local camp ministry or needy campers.)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession - Option #1

(Adapted from John Newton's "Amazing Grace," 1779, and from John Knox's "A Prayer for the Whole Estate of Christ's Church," 1556)

To be read while "Amazing Grace" is being played on organ, piano, guitar, flute...

Leader: Let us pray. Almighty God,
People: **Author and Giver of amazing grace,
Of such a sweet sound,
Able to save human beings such as we are,
Having been lost, now being found,
Blind, and now being able to see.**

Leader: To You, we give all thanks,
People: **For gifts so many we cannot count,
For wonders too magnificent to describe,
For blessings daily so ordinary we fail to notice,
For the ministry of camp and conference centres
across The Presbyterian Church in Canada.**

Leader: Receive our gratitude,
People: **For the ministry of _____, our local camp ministry
For a heritage of faith so rich,
From the first ones long ago who heard your voice,
Perceived your call,
And set forth on a covenant journey through life with You:
Your people Israel, the faithful prophets, Jesus,
his disciples, apostles,
and those who came to be known as "church."**

Leader: O Great Steward of the universe,
People: **Grant that the seeds sown by your Word and Spirit
Take deep root among all your people, young and older,
So the burning heat of persecution cannot cause its withering,
So the thorny cares of this life cannot cause its choking,
But may the seeds You nourish bring forth thirty, sixty,
A hundred fold.**

Leader: For grace has taught the need to bow before and honour You,
People: **And grace has all our fears relieved,
Precious in its first appearing, precious still, and ever more.**

Leader: For all in dangers, toils, and snares, those we know and those to us unknown,
People: **We pray your love and strength and peace
To fill, heal, lead,
Enlighten, encourage,
Abide and enfold,
So that, how ever long before death
And how ever long after,
We, with others, are privileged to serve in your name
and sing your praise,
That we may do so according to your faithfulness,
Which is from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen.**

Prayers of the People - Option #2

A bidding prayer, adapted from the Prayers of the People in the Book of Common Worship, PC(USA)

Almighty God, who taught us to pray not only for ourselves but for people everywhere, hear us as we pray.

Let us pray for creation.

(Silent prayer)

Creator of all, we thank you for the beauty of creation that surrounds us every day. We give you thanks for the water that refreshes us, the land that we inhabit, and the air that we breathe. Forgive us for overlooking the blessing that is our world and for abusing the resources with which you have trusted us. Help us to be better caretakers of all your creation.

Let us pray for the church.

(Silent prayer)

Gracious God, you have called us to be the church of Jesus Christ. Keep us one in faith and service, breaking bread together, and proclaiming the good news to the world, that all may believe you are love, turn to your ways, and live in the light of your truth.

Let us pray for our camp and conference centre ministries

(Silent prayer)

Eternal God, we thank you for the unique ministry that takes place at our camp and conference centres across the country. We lift up all those servants who minister in your name at these sites: directors, counsellors, office staff, cooks, maintenance staff, hosts and all those who volunteer their time and talents. May all those guests, summer campers or retreat participants, encounter you, your creation, and your everlasting love in these special places.

Let us pray for our community.

(Silent prayer)

Merciful God, we live in a world that is hurt and broken. Be with those who suffer and grant them peace. Watch over our community that it may be a place where we can live in relationship with one another as you modelled for us in the life of Jesus Christ. Strengthen parents to be responsible and loving that their children may know security and joy. Guide children to honour and cherish their parents with compassion. May all people discover your parental care by the respect, grace, and love given them by others.

Let us pray for peace.

(Silent prayer)

Bringer of Peace, our world is riddled with strife, conflict, and anger. Guide those with power to seek your will in resolving differences. Comfort and relieve all those who suffer and are oppressed. Strengthen those who work for peace around the world. May your world come to know the love, peace, and justice, which can only be found in you.

Holy God, as a potter fashions a vessel from humble clay, you form us into a new creation. Shape us, day by day, through the cross of Christ your Son, until we pray as continually as we breathe. May we glorify your name in all that we say or do; through Jesus Christ and in the mystery of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn/Camp Song

Benediction

Go forth into the world with the peace that creation brings, faith in God the Creator and the joy that we share as a community of love.

Hymn Suggestions - First number is *The Book of Praise* (1972). Second number is *The Book of Praise* (1997). xx means not available in that edition.

First Hymn/Song:

98 / 434 For the beauty of the earth	90 / 314 God is love
54 / 81 Unto the hills around	550 / 814 Morning has broken
569 / 410 Joyful, joyful we adore you	xx / 332 How great Thou art
xx / 301 Many and great	xx / 376 Shine Jesus Shine

Camp songs: Kumbayah, As the deer, Oh God you are my God, Awesome God

Second Hymn/Song:

105 / 435 All things bright and beautiful	xx / 475 I am the church, you are the church
xx / 474 The love of God comes close	xx / 476 Amigos de Cristo (add percussion instruments!)
xx / 655 Give me oil in my lamp	

Third hymn/song: from the above, or whatever supports your sermon, or what your camp alumni enjoy and want to teach

Commissioning hymn/song: whatever supports your sermon, or some camp favourites:

458 / 636 Be thou my vision	xx / 592 I, the Lord of sea and sky
xx / 634 Will you come and follow me	xx/ 622 Go now in peace

Camp songs: This little light of mine

Scripture readings and sermon ideas: You can preach about Christian camping and retreat ministry from just about any of the Revised Common Lectionary readings. After all, it's all about sharing the Good News in a Christian community. Ask a camp director for stories, and consider these themes:

Ministry of hospitality. In camp ministry, we welcome all people the way Jesus welcomes them, and each person as if he or she is Jesus, come to call on us. At camp, we often entertain angels unaware.

Front line evangelism. The camp/retreat experience is sometimes the first occasion where person – young or older – encounter the Good News. They come for the fun and friendship, feel the welcome of Christian hospitality, and encounter Jesus and the Bible. It is up to local congregations to nurture that new found faith.

Support for children and youth. Camp creates a safe, caring community where people can experience God's love, and explore those big questions about life in a supportive environment.

Encountering God through nature. Close encounters with nature sometimes lead to close encounters with God, especially in the context of Christian community. God also calls us to good stewardship of creation.

Spiritual renewal. Jesus often took the disciples to a place apart, or went by himself to a garden or mountain top or seashore to learn, pray and refresh. All of us need a time and place to "Be still, and know...God."

Mountain top experience. The experience of living and worshipping in a camp community can give a big boost to the faith of people - young and older - who may feel isolated in small communities, or in the secular environments of school or work.

Leader development. Christian camping provides opportunities for young and old to develop and practice leadership skills, and grow in depth and understanding of the Bible and Christian faith.

Building up the church. Research by the PC(USA) has found that almost half of ministers and other church leaders cite a camp or conference experience as significant in their sense of call to ministry. Camping and conference experiences also encourage young people to participate in their home congregation - if we welcome and encourage them.

If you want to use some of the Bible Discovery scripture themes from this year's curriculum resources, Peace Talks, they are Gen. 18: 1-8, Gen 1:1-2:3, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 6:27-36, Acts 2:41-47, and Lu.uke 4:16-21. If you want to learn more about *Peace Talks*, New Earth Christian Resources for the Outdoors, visit <http://www.nccusa.org/elmc/2006OutdoorMinistry.htm>

Other Ideas

- Camp alumni - campers, staff and volunteers - wear camp shirts to church.
- Invite camp staff to speak at your church on Camp Sunday or anytime through the year.
- Camp alumni - campers, staff and volunteers - share their stories in worship or church newsletter.
- Campers put together a collage of their own camp pictures and memories to display.
- Show of hands of how many people in the congregation have gone to camp.
- Kids teach adults how to make s'mores after church as dessert for potluck lunch.
- Display a list of names of camp staff. Ask members to choose one to pray for over the next year.
- Make a camp bulletin board to stay up all year, displaying summer campers, family camp, congregation's history at camp, etc.
- Play guitar with songs to give service a more "camp" feel.
- Move worship to the fellowship hall, and decorate with camp props: artificial trees, fake fire, canoe
- Plan a church-wide campfire, complete with hotdogs, s'mores, and worship around the fire.
- Raise money for camper scholarships to support needy children in your congregation or community.
- Plan a workday at camp. This can be for everyone, regardless of age or physical ability! Contact your local camp to see how you can use your gifts.
- Make camp brochures available to community groups who use your facilities, e.g. Guides, Scouts
- Send or bring a child to camp.