

I AM CAMP!

In the spring of 2009 a voice began to swell from within London Conference camps. The one voice became two, then three – and with the support of the camps and the London Conference office – the voice took shape, “I Am Camp!”



Together, camp and Conference staff created postcards which they made available to every United Church Camp across Canada during the summer. They encouraged camps to invite their campers, staff, and parents, to fill in the postcards and mail them to Nora Sanders, General Secretary of the General Council.



Written on each postcard were the following words:

*“Dear United Church,
Thank you for giving me the camp experience.
What I love most about camp is _____.
Thank you for camp. I believe in camp. I am camp.”*

During the summer of 2009, cards started to stream in to Nora’s office by the dozens. During General Council 40 in Kelowna, British Columbia (August 2009), the stream became a flood – and she received thousands more! By the time the flood trickled to a small stream, Nora had received 3,817 postcards from campers of all ages!

Asking a camper to choose what they love *most* about camping was obviously a challenging question since many campers couldn’t decide on any one thing, and simply wrote, “Everything!”

Here’s a quick overview of what was shared:

Campers:

- Camp makes me want to be a better person throughout the whole year
- Camp is what I dream about
- Camp is Home
- What I loved most was “getting my own bed!”
- Camp = Life, summed up in four letters
- At camp I’m free to be who I am instead of hiding
- I feel closest to God at camp
- I feel like the best version of myself when I’m at camp
- Camp makes my heart sing!

Parents:

- I’ve served as leader – my children attended every summer – and then as leaders. As a single parent I appreciated the spiritual guidance the camp gave and lived!
- What I love most about camp is . . . “Dirty laundry from happy kids.”
- Seeing my children smile non-stop!

What’s Most Loved about United Church Camping

Friendship & Community: 1,229
All Program Activities: 938
Everything: 453
The Outdoors: 259
Singing/Campfire: 216
Learning about God: 215
Counsellors/Staff: 175
Camp Food: 168
Acceptance & Personal Growth: 139
Cabin time: 74

- My son cried because he didn't want to leave! It was the best week of his life – was his comment when I came to take him home.
- My mother was a camper – I was a camper – now my children are campers.

Youth Counsellors:

- I wouldn't change one little thing. This was my first year as a counsellor and I have to say it was absolutely amazing!
- I will never have a better bonding experience with those around me
- Camp changed my life.
- Camp developed me into who I am today with regards to my confidence, abilities, and personality, how I work and play, how I treat others and my appreciation for the elements of nature and life. I love how camp made me part of who I am.
- Watching a child discover their inner beauty and God's eternal love.
- At camp I met the most influential people in my life
- Camp is the reason I'm still involved in the church.
- Camp is awe-inspiring, life-changing, and with you forever! Once a camper, always a camper!



Camp Staff:

- Camp offers young people who otherwise would not experience camping but receive 'camperships' from local congregations. These young people experience outdoor beauty and communal living in a safe environment.
- Camp encourages the kid in adults, and responsibility in youth
- Integrating special need campers
- The way the church can reach out to young people – the future of the church.
- Reaching out to youth of all faiths.

Others:

- I joined the United Church because of camp
- I believe in camp – and I have believed in it for over 50 years
- Camp was the start of my journey to become a minister
- I met my wife at camp.
- I met my husband at camp.
- More kids than I've seen in any UCC congregation!
- Camp is responsible for my being in the ministry I am in – it really did form me well.

If you're not already involved with a United Church Camp, we invite you to join us in this exciting and rewarding ministry.



2009 Youth Counsellors, Camp Abegweit, PEI