

How to Use the “We Are Camp” Campaign Kit



Introduction

General Council 40's resolution “to recognize camping ministries as one of the primary places for faith formation, and as a priority for the church” is a directive for the whole church, not just the General Council Executive and staff. *We Are the Church—We Are Camp.*

The steps outlined below are a guide to help you engage with the campaign as camps, presbyteries, and Conferences, and use the campaign material to create or strengthen camp relationships with local congregations.

Purpose

The purpose of the “We Are Camp” campaign is to provide resources for camps to use in raising awareness that camping is an integral ministry for young people, an active and growing outreach ministry of the church that can strengthen and renew the church's ministry to children, young teens, and youth. The key message is that *intentional linkages between camps and congregations will benefit the ministry of both.*

The final Sunday in April (April 25, 2010) is an ideal opportunity to host a Camping Sunday service in your congregation, and raise awareness of your local camp and of camping ministry in general. Begin your planning now, with the help of the “We Are Camp” campaign resources.

Conference and presbytery staff are encouraged to use the campaign resources, and this how-to guide, to increase awareness of camping ministry in individual presbyteries and the wider Conference region, as well as to support camps in their campaign efforts.

The following steps will take you through a preparation and planning process for Camping Sunday and other special events in your region.

STEP 1: KNOWING WHY & WHERE YOU'RE GOING

CAMPS:

Hold a special meeting with the camp board and staff to discuss plans and preparations for how to implement the “We Are Camp” campaign in your region.

Introduce the campaign. Share the purpose of the campaign (described above), and give everyone an opportunity to see the “We Are Camp” resources.

Work through the Small Group Guide (see p. 5).

Read through the steps of the planning process below as a group. Use them as a guideline for how your camp will proceed. Be creative—expand the limitations of this how-to guide, and create your own plan for growing partnerships with local congregations.

CONFERENCE/PRESBYTERY:

At your next presbytery or Conference camp committee meeting, discuss how you can encourage camps to participate in the campaign, and what your Conference or presbytery can do to promote the campaign throughout the area.

Introduce the campaign. Share the purpose of the campaign (described above), and give everyone an opportunity to see the “We Are Camp” resources.

Work through the Small Group Guide (see p. 5).

Read through the steps of the planning process below as a group. Use them as a guideline for how you will proceed. Be creative—expand the limitations of this how-to guide, and create your own plan for growing partnerships between camps and local congregations.

STEP 2: PREPARATION

CAMPS, CONFERENCES, and PRESBYTERIES:

Read the “We Are Camp” material and watch the DVD; become familiar with the campaign resources (print resource, DVD, posters, brochure, and *Camping News* special edition). Check out the webpage at www.united-church.ca/exploring/camping/campaign.

Decide on what additional material you may wish to create and/or include.

STEP 3: MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

CAMPS:

Make a phone call to the minister of your local congregations. If a presbytery next to you does not have a camp in it, reach out to the congregations in that presbytery as well.

Ask for an appointment with the minister and/or church board. A face-to-face meeting is much more personal and effective than a phone call. If you are unable to meet in person, make an appointment with the minister or board chair to talk by phone, honouring their busy schedule.

Ask if they have seen the “We Are Camp” poster that was mailed to all pastoral charges in the January 2010 Infopac. Explain that you want to meet to discuss the “We Are Camp” campaign, and how your camp can partner with their congregation. Tell them it shouldn’t last longer than an hour.

CONFERENCE/PRESBYTERY:

Make a phone call to the board chairs of each of your camps. If you don’t have a camp in your presbytery, contact a nearby presbytery that does. Find out if they are familiar with the “We Are Camp” campaign, and ask if there is anything you can do to support them in their campaign efforts.

Conference and presbytery staff are encouraged to let camps know of your willingness to support them throughout the campaign.

STEP 4: THE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING OR PHONE CALL

CAMPS:

Introduce the “We Are Camp” campaign. Share the purpose and key message of the campaign (see p. 1), and provide time and opportunity to look at the “We Are Camp” resources.

Provide them with a complimentary copy of *We Are Camp: United Church Camps and Congregations—Partners in Ministry*. Tell them it’s written specifically for ministry leaders in congregations. Additional copies may be purchased for \$6.95 from UCRD.

Share promotional material on your camp (newsletters, brochures, etc.), and

- Briefly tell them about your camp—whom you serve in general terms (children, youth, families, adults, seniors, schools, community organizations, etc.)
- Briefly tell them about your campers—where they come from (local community, local United Church congregations, other faiths, etc.). Use the inside cover of the “We Are Camp” print resource to talk about what camping ministry offers.
- Briefly tell them about your volunteers—where they come from (local congregation and community), how many (board, staff), age ranges, what they do, etc. Talk about how your camp thrives because of the service of volunteers.
- Stay positive. People will be motivated to join and support you if you tell stories about how wonderful your camp is, how you are changing lives for the better, and how important your camp is to your campers and staff.
- Talk about partnership opportunities you would like to establish with their local congregation. Ask them to identify partnership opportunities they would like to see happen.
- Invite the congregation to an open house at your camp this spring. Offer tours of the camp, activities for people of all ages, a special luncheon, etc.
- Offer your camp’s services to host the national Camping Sunday service in their congregation on April 25. A special service for 2010, additional ideas for Camping Sunday, and services from past years are available online at www.united-church.ca/planning/seasons/camping.
- Ask if you could post the two “We Are Camp” posters in the church lobby/narthex, and place some brochures on a table.
- When the meeting is over, be sure to express your appreciation for their time, and thank them for whatever support and partnership possibilities they are open to.

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALL

CAMPS:

Whether your first meeting was in person or by phone, make a follow-up call to

- discuss how work is proceeding on any tasks you have each agreed to
- ask if any additional questions or concerns have arisen since your meeting

STEP 6: SPECIAL SPRING ACTIVITIES

CAMPS:

Plan and prepare for special activities your camp can hold to welcome and involve local congregations:

- camp open house
- Camping Sunday service

Keep the local congregation informed on an ongoing basis, with announcements in the church bulletin and/or special inserts.

CONFERENCE/PRESBYTERY:

- Ask your webmaster to post a link to the campaign webpage on your website.
- Include an item in your newsletter or *Observer* insert on the campaign.
- Have a special display at your Annual General Meeting on camping—both as a broader ministry of the church, as well as promoting the individual camps in your Conference/presbytery.



One article in the “We Are Camp” print resource is “Be Careful or the ‘Camp People’ Will Get You!” It’s a delightful description of how one clergy person became a camp enthusiast. She ends her article with the following:

“If you are wondering where to start, listen to the camp people. They have a story worth hearing... I did not start out a camp enthusiast—my mantra would have been ‘I am not a camp person’—but alas here I am... And a note of warning out of my own experience — don’t just be wary of the camp people, *pray that they find you!*”

***Camps have a story worth hearing!
Join hands with local ministry leaders and local congregations.***

SMALL GROUP GUIDE for Camp Boards & Staff

Whatever your camp decides to do with the “We Are Camp” campaign depends on your answers to the following questions. Have this conversation with your camp board first. Invite staff to attend. Once you know why you’re going, you’ll know where you’re going, and all you have to plan is how to get there.

Why get involved in the “We Are Camp” campaign?

Historically, camps grew out of camp-meetings where people of all ages came together for teaching, spiritual renewal, and transformation. For over 50 years before church union (1925), Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational/Union churches established camps in various parts of the country, not in a centrally planned way, but in response to the Spirit leading them to create these ministry opportunities. For the past 85 years, United Church congregations have supported the creation, development, maintenance, and ongoing growth of camps. But what’s happening today? Are local camps, and camping ministry in general, on the radar of the church? of local congregations? of local church members?

In the past, talk about the ties between camp experiences and local churches hardly seemed necessary. Clergy and other ministry leaders in the congregation regularly came with the participants from their local community. That’s how most camps were staffed. These same leaders would return home with their own group knowing what had happened in the lives of the participants. Decisions made and new connections with God could be supported over the long haul.

Today, staffing models vary from totally volunteer staffs to hired summer staff or some combination of the two. Often, people no longer come with a group from their local church. They sign up as individuals, and there may not be a local church leader from their community on the camp program staff. United Church camps also serve large numbers of people who have no local church affiliation. What will happen when they return home? Who will nurture the seeds of faith growing within them? New conscious, intentional connections between camps and congregations would be a great benefit.¹

Raising awareness of camping as an invaluable ministry for the whole church holds clear benefits to local camps and their campers:

- educates and informs leaders in the church (congregation, presbytery, Conference, General Council) about the value of camping ministry (leaders who make decisions regarding policy, budget, etc.)
- uplifts camps as a place where church members can volunteer to share their gifts, make financial donations, and discover a variety of ways to live out their ministry
- moves camps from what may feel like isolation, to visibility and partnership opportunities
- creates opportunities for camps to partner with congregations who can follow up with campers in their home communities
- and so much more...

¹ *Camps and Local Congregations: An Unparalleled Faith-Shaping Partnership* by Kevin Witt, United Methodist Church, in *Camping News*, Special Edition 2010, page 10.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do we want to raise awareness of our camp and United Church camping ministry?

Is it to get more campers? Raise money? Make our camp more available to kids who would benefit from the camping experience?

What place does the faith formation of children and youth hold in our camp's ministry and our desire to promote our camp?

2. What kind of support is our camp looking for?

Do we need more volunteers or staff? Financial donations? New facilities built?

3. How do we hope to benefit from the campaign and a greater awareness of camping ministry as a priority for the church?

4. What are our fears about this campaign, and how can we meet them head-on?

5. What do you like or dislike about the campaign and its resources?

Discuss what you can add to make the resources more effective.

6. Using the planning process described above as a rough guide, discuss ways in which your camp can share the campaign resources (and any additional resources you wish to add) with your local congregation and/or local community.