

Christian Education for Hardisty Lake United Church Camp

Notes on Christian Education Leadership at Hardisty Lake United Church Camp

There are three main areas of involvement for the Christian Education Leader throughout the day:

- Morning Watch
- theme time/Bible study
- evening vesper service

Morning Watch involves the whole group. Just before breakfast, the bell is rung and campers gather near the Joy Hall and then move to the beach (weather permitting), etc., at the direction of the Christian Education Leader. Here we greet the day in whatever way seems appropriate: song, prayer, quiet, story, etc. It's good to incorporate some kind of embodied prayer, or action for a song, just to get people awake and moving, responding to the gift of another day, and/or introducing the theme that you're using this week or that day.

For theme time/Bible study you'll be meeting with the campers in small groups, preferably 10–15 people/group. A one-hour session/day/group is best. The Christian Education meeting space is usually the tent [tarp & metal frame structure] or in the Joy Hall. For this group time the Christian Education Leader needs to be attentive to what is age-appropriate for each camp so that the biblical stories can be discussed and integrated wholeheartedly.

In order to plan and lead the evening vesper service, the Christian Education Leader works with one or two cabin groups. The preparation time available for this is usually one of the "chores" that happens after supper. For vespers, the day's theme or key biblical story is central, along with opening and closing hymns/songs and a form of prayer. The children who are leaders for each night can act out/present the story, lead an echo song, be a choir, provide various voices and ideas for the prayers, etc. Participation comes way ahead of perfection.

Note: The Christian Education Leader needs to be made aware of any special needs of the campers if these will in any way affect their participation in the small groups (i.e. learning disabilities, serious allergies [bee-stings, for example]).

Themes of Sessions

Each day's theme is a day in the life of Jesus.

Day 1: Christmas

(The Story of Jesus' Birth)

Ideas for Theme Time

Bible Reference

Matthew 2:1-16 and Luke 2:1-20 (*These are the two different stories of Jesus' birth in the Bible. They are often combined in modern retellings of the story.*)

Note: We don't really know the day or exact year when Jesus was born. No exact records were kept. The stories we have in the Bible were written down by followers who wanted to remember and convey to others how special their teacher and friend Jesus had been. It makes us think that even a baby born in a stable can grow up to become a wise teacher, who has earth-changing ideas. Perhaps that what the star symbolizes, that Jesus would be a guiding light in any time of darkness.)

Story Possibilities

The Stable Where Jesus Was Born by Rhonda Gowler Greene and Susan Gaber

Jesus' Christmas Party by Nicholas Allan

The Nativity illustrated by Julie Vivas

Discussion Possibilities

(Help the campers talk about the Christmas holiday and its relationship to Jesus' birth. You can also use this first day at camp to talk about your own birth story, and the campers' own birth stories.)

When you think of the birth of Jesus in the stable, what comes to mind?

What does your family do that reminds you "Jesus is the reason for the season"? (*i.e. We read the story of the Wisemen/Magi before opening our presents; we give presents [white gifts/Santa's anonymous] to those who are the "children of lowly"/humble origins" in our world today; we set up a crèche/nativity scene at home; we use Advent candle wreaths; we use Advent calendars; we have a "Happy Birthday Jesus" cake on Christmas Eve; we go to church and sing Christmas songs by candlelight, etc.)*)

What do you think of when you think of Christmas?

(The word "gospel" that's used in the Bible means "good news.")

How was Jesus' birth good news?

What stories have you been told about your birth? How was your birth announced? (*By angels, or by a notice in the paper, or by phone calls and sending cards in the mail?*)

What kinds of gifts does a baby need?

What kinds of presents do you like giving to others?

Possibilities for an Extra Activity

Christmas Quiz (from page 129 of *Youth Spirit 2*)

Name That Carol (from page 121 of *Youth Spirit 2*)

Candy of the Day

Candy canes (*Note that they are shaped like the shepherd's crook and "J" for Jesus.*)

(You might want to turn the sharing of today's candy into the "gift unwrapping" game. Wrap the candy in a box with many layers of Christmas gift wrap [recycled is good!]. The campers sit in a circle. The leader plays/sings Christmas music while the children pass the gift around the circle from one to another. When the music stops, the child holding the gift begins to unwrap it. As soon as the music starts again, the gift is passed until again the music stops. When the gift is finally unwrapped, it is to be enjoyed by everyone.)

Ideas for Evening Vespers

Opening Song

"Joy to the World," "Go, Tell It on the Mountain," "Away in a Manger"

Drama Possibilities

One or more narrators read "A Christmas Pageant" (three photocopied pages) and the campers dress up and create the scenes as they are mentioned. (*This narration is meant to go with a series of slides, but the campers can use the descriptions as clues to how the scene keeps changing. Props and costumes for the Nativity story will be at the camp. We might be able to have "real" sheep and a donkey visit camp too.*)

Prayer Possibilities

At Christmas Time (page 59 of *Joyful Noise*)

Closing Worship Prayer (page 50 of *Youth Spirit 2*)

Closing Song

"Silent Night" (*Everyone could hold a candle during the singing of this song, or there could be tin can star lights [luminarias] at the front of the chapel area [see page 37 of Gathered 'Round by Kim McKellar].*)

DAY 2: Off in the Desert (Jesus' Ministry Begins)

Ideas for Morning Watch

Story Possibilities

Thank You, God, for Me by Marilyn Perry
I Want to Be by Thylas Moss and Jerry Pinkney

Song Possibilities

"I Am Amazing" (an echo song, a laminated sheet music)
"I Am A Child of God" (chorus from page 11 of the Pentecost 2003 Music Section of *Seasons of the Spirit* curriculum)

Prayer Possibility

Litany of Earth-Caring (from page 56 of *World Peas*)

Ideas for Theme Time

Bible Reference

Matthew 3:1—4:11; Mark 1:2-13; Luke 3:21-22, 4:1-13

Story Possibilities

"This is My Beloved Son" (page 94 of *Jesus and His Kingdom of Equals*)
Our Baby's Being Baptized edited by Marilyn Perry
I Want to Be by Thylas Moss and Jerry Pinkney

Discussion Possibilities

Talk with the campers about how they've seen baptisms performed: pouring, sprinkling, or immersion? (*Baptisms are done to show that we are born anew into God's family. To know that we belong to God as God's beloved sons and daughters is an awesome feeling. It's also a big responsibility. Jesus' baptism represents Jesus' readiness to accept God's purpose for his life. He was going to live faithfully in response to God's will/call. He would live as God's heir, God's representative. He hoped that people would see in him the love of God. The time he spent in the desert, fasting and praying, was a difficult test. To be true to being God's son he had to resist temptations and outwit the devil. Jesus used the scriptures he knew [by heart] to stay strong in countering the devil's propositions. Jesus wasn't going to test God but he did trust God.*)

When have you been faced with difficult choices?

What are the things you can believe/trust in when temptations come your way?

When have you felt abandoned by God and when have you felt God's presence in your life?

How do you know you're God's beloved child? When is it easiest to feel this?
Hardest?

Possibilities for Activities

Zen gardens (*boxes with sand and a few rocks, a plastic fork for the rake that one uses to make patterns in the sand*)

For Junior Two there'll be "Feel Good Boxes" (*These were developed by Alberta Mental Health. They help kids understand that they have inner resources to get them through difficult times.*)

Who Are You? (page 84 of *World Peas*)

Candy of the Day

Cactus Candy or Fizz or Pop Rocks

Ideas for Evening Vespers

Song Possibilities

"I Feel Happy Now" (page 76 of *All God's Children Sing*, to the tune of Kum Ba Yah)

"This Little Light of Mine" (page 66 of *All God's Children Sing*)

"Give Me Oil" (page 130 of *Songs for a Gospel People*)

"If I Were a Butterfly" (page 32 of *All God's Children Sing*)

"Psalm 100: Make a Joyful Noise" (page 90 of *Gathered 'Round*)

Drama Possibility

There's a drama about temptations in Alana Johnson's book *Fearless Pharaoh*.

Closing Prayer

A Blessing for All the Children of the World (page 18 of *The Gentle Dark* by Alyson Huntly)

Day 3: At the Seashore (Jesus Chooses His Special Friends)

Ideas for Morning Watch

For Morning Watch today you could use the net made of onion/orange bags to be the focal point and say that today we'll be talking about Jesus walking along the edge of Lake Galilee where he saw some people who were busy fishing. Jesus extended an invitation to the fishers: "Follow me," he said, "and I will teach you to catch people." Lead the children, using various actions, in a "conga line" while singing "We Are the Church" (page 84 of *All God's Children Sing*), "Lead Me Jesus" (page 6 of *Come Join the Circle*), "I Am the Light of the World" (page 24 of *Songs for a Gospel People*), or "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" (page 105 of *Joyful Noise*).

or

You could use the "Body Movement Prayer" from page 119 of *Youth Spirit*.

Ideas for Theme Time

Bible Reference

Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11, 8:1-3

Story Possibilities

The Call of the Disciples by Bernard Hubler and Chantal Muller van den Berghe

or

"An Invitation" (page 101 of *Jesus and His Kingdom of Equals*)

Discussion Possibilities

(For older campers, see also page 98 of *Jesus and His Kingdom of Equals* regarding the activity/game called Judging Character.)

What kind of people is Jesus looking for to be his disciples/followers? (*Jesus seemed to surround himself with ordinary, hard-working people. The disciples are not highly educated people who had already spent a lot of time studying the scriptures. Jesus seemed able to look inside people for friends he could trust. Jesus never "went along with the crowd." He didn't seem to be choosing fashionable, rich, popular, people, but those who were often left out or disliked.*)

Why are certain people popular? (*Is it for their clothes, personality, athletic ability, looks?*)

What is the difference between personality and character? (*Consider personality as "outside," what we show to the world, and character as "inside," what we really are like.*)

Have you ever heard the expression: "You can't judge a book by its cover?" How does it fit with this Bible story?

We can wonder what difference having Jesus as a friend made in the lives of the 12 men he chose as disciples.

(Questions for younger children:)

What kinds of things do you think Jesus and his disciples did together?

A disciple was a learner. It's the name given to a student or follower of a particular kind of teaching. Jesus was teaching his disciples to befriend all of God's children.

What do friends do for you? What do you do as a friend to others?

Possibilities for Activities

Play "Who Wants to Be a Disciple?" (page 106 of Youth Spirit 2)

Make a masking tape or finger labyrinth (pages 88, 86, and 123 of Youth Spirit 2)

Candy of the Day

Blue whales or seashell chocolates

Ideas for Evening Vespers

Story of a Disciple and the Last Supper

The Testimony of Andrew by Margaret Wooten and Hope Harle-Moule (*The story is taped onto the backs of picture cards. At the end of the story you can share bread and juice.*)

A Reading/Poem

"Somewhere – Someone" by the Rev. Thomas Carruth (page 100 of *Jesus and His Kingdom of Equals*)

Song Possibilities

"Yes, Jesus Calls Me" (page 53 of *All God's Children Sing*)

"Just Like Salt!" (page 33 of *All God's Children's Sing*)

"Break the Bread, Share the Cup" (page 3 of *All God's Children Sing*)

"A Place in the Choir" (page 4 of *All God's Children Sing*)

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" (page 30 of *Come Join the Circle*)

A Litany of Thanksgiving

One: God gives us friends to laugh with, and play with, and talk to.

All: Thank you, God, for friends.

One: God gives us friends to cheer us up when we feel sad and give us a hug when we feel bad.

All: Thank you, God, for friends.

One: God gives us friends at camp, at church, on our teams, at school, and in our families.

All: Thank you, God, for friends.

Words to Introduce Communion (the sharing of the bread and juice)

One person can either sing or say the "Communion Song" (page 32 of Come Join the Circle) or "Fill the Cup and Share the Bread" (page 9 of the Pentecost 2003 Music Section of Seasons of the Spirit curriculum) and then have everyone say together the Lord's Prayer.

or

Use "Liturgy for Communion" (page 102 of Youth Spirit 2).

Day 4: Easter

Ideas for Morning Watch

Possibilities for Readings

"Easter Sunday" (page 141 of *Youth Spirit*)

Ideas for Theme Time

Bible Reference

Matthew chapters 26–28; Mark chapters 14–16; Luke chapters 22–24; and John chapters 18–20

Story Possibilities

Benjamin's Box by Melody Carlson and Jack Stockman

"Philip's Easter Egg" (page 105 of *Youth Spirit 2*)

The Tale of Three Trees by Angela Elwell Hunt

Ideas for Activities

A treasure hunt to find items similar to those in the story Benjamin's Box, find snail shells as miniature tombs, or use face paints to make a butterfly (nose is body) on each camper's face—a symbol of transformation/resurrection.



Candy of the Day

Chocolate coins or Easter eggs/jelly beans

Ideas for Evening Vespers

Possibilities for Readings

Rock Meditation (pages 101 and 103-104 of *Youth Spirit 2*)

At Easter, We Remember (page 82 of *Joyful Noise*)

Song Possibilities

"And God Said Yes!" (page 8 of the Lent/Easter 2003 Music Section of the *Seasons of the Spirit* curriculum)

Day 5: Filled with the Spirit

Ideas for Closing Worship

Bible Reference

Acts chapter 2

Story Possibilities

Peter the Pentecost Balloon

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Candy of the Day

Bubble gum