

Intergenerational Service

Camping Sunday Service

by Eric Hamlyn and Tracy Murton

Introduction

This service is designed to be intergenerational with options for people of all ages to provide leadership and to engage in a celebration of camping together. You could include in the announcements that people might share their own camping stories during coffee hour. The hymns selected are from *Voices United*; if your congregation uses a different hymn book, let us know, and we would be happy to help select something else for you. If you choose to use the "Creation Account" by Keri Wehlander as the Call to Worship, or "Go" by Julian Pattison (see separate file) as your closing hymn, please contact them and include their copyright information in your bulletin (see Credits at the end). Happy camping!

Slide Show (optional)

As a way to invite people to start thinking about camp, organize a slide show of pictures from your local camp and have it running as people arrive. If you have the technology, use PowerPoint, scan photos from your local camp, and download pictures from the national website (www.united-church.ca/exploring/camping). You could also create slides from the photos to use with a slide projector. Talk to your Conference office or to United Church Archives for photos/ slides from earlier generations. Invite people from the congregation who have been to camp to bring their photos and create a poster for people to see. Also talk to your local camp—they may have a display that you can borrow. Be creative: have music playing in the background; have someone narrate the camp's story; have fun!

Call to Worship

(You will need: a sparkler, bubbles, a rock, a small branch, a jug of water and something to pour it into, three candles, stuffed toy animals, and a paper chain of people. You could have seven people participate, and as each item—and action for Day 7—is named, one of the seven places it on a table at the front to create a worship centre.)

Creation Account by Keri Wehlander (see below for copyright information)

It was Day 1. God looked around, God looked all the way around, and God decided it was time for something brand new. So God said, "Let there be light (*sparkler*) and darkness (*when it goes out*)." And God said, "That's good...that's very good."

It was Day 2. God looked around, God looked all the way around, and God decided it was time for something brand new. So God said, "Let there be sky (*bubbles*)." And God said, "That's good...that's very good."

Please credit the source. Thank you!

"Intergenerational Service" by Eric Hamlyn of Ryerson United Church, Vancouver, and Tracy Murton of Vancouver Burrard and South Presbyteries. Downloaded from www.united-church.ca/exploring/camping.

It was Day 3. God looked around, God looked all the way around, and God decided it was time for something brand new. So God said, "Let there be earth (*rock*), and seas (*pour water*), and plants (*branch*)." And God said, "That's good...that's very good."

It was Day 4. God looked around, God looked all the way around, and God decided it was time for something brand new. So God said, "Let there be sun (*light candle*), and a moon (*light candle*), and stars (*light candle*)." And God said, "That's good...that's very good."

It was Day 5. God looked around, God looked all the way around, and God decided it was time for something brand new. So God said, "Let there be creatures of the water (*frog*), and creatures of the air (*bird*)." And God said, "That's good...that's very good."

It was Day 6. God looked around, God looked all the way around, and God decided it was time for something brand new. So God said, "Let there be creatures of the earth (*pig*), and humankind in my own image (*paper chain people*)." And God said, "That's good...that's very good."

It was Day 7. God looked around, God looked all the way around. And God said, "This is good" (*a big loud yawn*). And then God said, "I'm really tired. I think I'm ready for a rest and in fact I think the seventh day is a day of rest!" And God blessed the seventh day as a day of rest.

Sing: "Make a Joyful Noise" (*Voices United* pg. 820)

Prayer of Approach

Creating God, we give you thanks for bringing us here together today. We ask you to be with us as we celebrate camping. We give thanks for the amazing things that happen at (*insert your local camp name*). Help us to be open in our story sharing, and to listen carefully to the stories of others. Help us to continue to learn more about you in each other and in the world you created. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Storytime (campfire)

(If you can, create a campfire-like atmosphere for your story time. Your local Scouts often have electric campfires that you could borrow, or find some logs that are dry, and snow-free, to sit on. Read a children's story, like Giraffe's Can't Dance by Giles Andreae (Orchard Books, 2001). It's a fabulous story about accepting each other for our uniqueness, an important part of why people come to camp. You may know other stories that would share the same message.)

(Depending on the story you choose, ask questions of the children about their experience at camp and how it might relate to the story. What are the things they

remember about camp? Have they ever felt a little out of place—like Gerald in the story? What are some examples of ways we could help make people feel welcome, either at church or at camp?)

Sing: “It Only Takes a Spark” (VU 289)

Scripture: Luke 18:15-17

Meditation - “Take Me There!”

(Read the following meditation slowly, pausing briefly after each question. Make the meditation your own. Name specific places at your local camp on your walk-about, specific kinds of trees—maybe some of them have names—the kinds of flowers and the smells, etc... Make it your own and enjoy!)

I'd like to invite you to close your eyes for a moment. In case you've never been to camp before, or even if you have, I want to take you there now. Picture yourself on your way to camp. Who's in the car with you? How long does it take to get there? Is your car filled with everything you'll need for the week or, whoops, did you forget something at home? Oh well, it's too late to go back now. Maybe they'll have some extra towels or flashlights at camp you can borrow for the week. As you pull up to camp are you nervous, or filled with excitement, or both? Are there lots of kids and parents running around, playing, and unloading their backpacks and sleeping bags? Are you greeted by your leaders and counsellors as you arrive? You're here! You've made it! After you've had a chance to settle in your bunk, you're out with your leaders on a nature walk around the site. What do you see? What kind of plants and trees do you see? Do you hear the birds chirping? What else do you hear? Is it very quiet? Or are kids talking a lot and asking questions? What are they asking? Do you touch the ferns as you pass through them? What else do you touch? Do you pick up a soft stone as you walk along the beach and hold it to see how it feels in your hand? What do you smell? Does it smell differently here than at home? Smell the scent of the flowers and the freshness of the soil. Somehow, the air seems cleaner and fresher here at camp. Take a deep breath in through your nose and smell the fresh, lightly scented air. Now hold your arms out-stretched high in the air, and tilt your head back to look up into the beautiful blue sky. As the sun breaks through the trees, give thanks to God this very moment for the opportunity to be at camp. And as a smile comes to your face, you know it's going to be a very good week!

Vignettes on “What Brings Me to Camp”

(Use the examples below or ask people in your congregation who have been to camp to share their stories—maximum five minutes each. Invite a child, a youth, an adult, and a senior. Keep it intergenerational.)

I invite you listen to some of the wise voices:

Hi, My Name is **Jenn**. I'm a single mom and I have two small boys. Jeremy who's eight and Nicholas who's five. We're having a pretty hard time right now, especially after my boyfriend of five years left us. It was in May of last year. I was devastated and didn't know what I was going to do. Luckily I found a part-time job, which is enough to pay for food and rent, but not much left for anything else. I really needed a break. Me and the boys really needed to get away for a holiday, but I knew that was out of the question, and certainly out of the budget. One Sunday morning I decided we needed to go to church. An announcement was made about a United Church summer camp and a contact number was printed in the bulletin. I called the office the next day and inquired about the Mom & Kid's Camp. I couldn't afford to pay the whole amount; actually, all I could pay was a little less than half the amount. I was told we would be accepted to attend camp in July. I was ecstatic. This was exactly what we needed. I was so excited to get home and tell the boys we were going on a holiday and we all had something to look forward to. July came in no time, and we were off to camp. We had an amazing time. The staff members were so nice to the boys. They did things we could never afford to do. It was like a new adventure every day. We went swimming, hiking, and canoeing. The kids even did an overnight camp-out in the field while the moms were treated to a spa evening by some of the staff. On Sunday morning we all went to an outdoor chapel service and during the service had an opportunity to offer aloud what we were thankful for. As moms and kids spoke aloud the things that they were thankful for, my heart was filled with gratitude and tears of joy flowed freely from my eyes. I knew I had found a place for my boys to grow up and I definitely knew we'd be back here for many years to come. Thank you God for United Church Camping!

Hi, my name's **Frank** and I've been involved in United Church Camping for the past 61 years, ever since I was a young boy. I grew up in the church and every summer I would head off to camp. I made a lot of good friends throughout my years of camping. You know what they say, "Camping friends are forever." Well, that's certainly the way I feel. I still get together with some of the guys I went to camp with and correspond with a few others who've moved away. My father helped build this camp in 1931, and I'm still on the Camp Board. My kids also grew up through United Church Camping and now I have three grandchildren that go there as well. I guess you could say it's a family tradition. My last time at camp was just two years ago when we all decided to attend a Family Camp together. It was really special to spend that week together in a place we all grew up in and had such good memories of. Personally, my body's not made for those little bunks anymore, but the kids didn't seem to mind at all. They were just going from dawn 'til dusk. One of my favourite memories from that experience is sitting around a table in the dining hall as family, saying grace and eating together. I also loved bundling up warm for an evening campfire followed by a vespers service and being sent off to bed softly singing to each other "Go now in peace, go now in peace, may the love of God surround you, everywhere, everywhere, you may go." And may it always be so!

Hi, my name's **Jessica** and I'm 11 years old. My best friend Sarah asked me to go to camp with her last summer. She'd been there before and said it was lots of fun. I begged Mom and Dad to let me go, and they finally gave in. We had so much fun.

We met lots of other kids, and the leaders were really cool. They were like big kids, not like parents! They would always have something fun for us to do every day. One day we did a scavenger hunt which took FOREVER because our whole team was tied together. It was really fun though. Another day we did a mock car rally. Each cabin group made their own cars out of cardboard boxes and painted them however they wanted. Ours was like "Herbie the Lovebug" with big, bright, colourful flowers painted everywhere. When the cars were complete we had to race through an obstacle course which ended by going through a car wash. We got soaking wet and screamed very loudly as the counsellors threw water over us. I hope we do this again next year. I think the boys got a lot wetter than us. I also learned a lot about God that week. I learned that God loves me all the time, even when I mess up or forget. I learned that Jesus was a really cool guy too and that he told amazing stories and did a lot of nice things for people. He included everyone and didn't leave anybody out. We painted pictures of God in arts and crafts, and I had no idea how different God looked to so many people. We were told that it was okay to picture God differently, remembering that God is Love! We also did a lot of swimming and boating and on the last night we dressed in our cleanest clothes and had a big banquet with a special dinner. The leaders called us up one by one and gave us each a card they had made for us that said nice things about us. It was kind of embarrassing, but I still have it on my night table and read it all the time. Sarah and I are definitely going back to camp again next year, and we can't wait until we're old enough to be leaders.

Sing: "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" (VU 509)

Offering

Offertory Hymn: "For the Gift of Creation" (VU 538)

Prayers of the People

Open with: " Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (VU 400)

(Invite people to offer their own joys and concerns. You could move around the room with a microphone, or people could come to the front and light a candle, or you could distribute paper and pens and collect their "stories." Conclude with The Youth Room Lord's Prayer):

**Our Ever-loving God,
 Creator and Protector,
 Provide us faith to find your heaven.
 Let your sacred name shine within us!
 Open the gates of your heart and let heaven come.
 May we do all we can with our lives, no matter where we are.
 Fulfill our needs with sufficient sustenance for our bodies,
 And inspiration for our souls.
 Thank you for loving us, and giving us another chance,
 And give us the courage and strength to forgive those who harm us,**

**So we may all live in harmony.
Help us to dismiss distractions from knowing and loving you.
Guide our hearts away from false happiness.
You are reason, power, and life,
A song that brightens and beautifies the world,
Over and over again.
Alleluia! Rejoice!**

Close with: "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (VU 400)

Sing: " Go" by Julian Pattison (see separate file)

Commissioning and Benediction

(The following works best if you ask people to form a circle and invite them to look at each other. If a circle is tricky, you could invite people to look around the room at each other before beginning. Alternate left and right sides of the room.)

Left: These are people who are friends and strangers.

Right: These are people who share sacred stories.

Left: These are people who God loves unconditionally.

Right: These are people who long to be accepted.

Left: These are people who laugh and play freely.

Right: These are people who pray and sing fully.

Left: These are people who offer welcome to others.

Right: These are people who expect great things.

Left: These are people who take risks faithfully.

Right: These are people who yearn for community.

Left: These are people who dance to the music they love.

All: These are people who love camping. Go into this world knowing that the love of God, the courage of the Christ, and the playfulness of the Spirit is with you and all you love. Amen.

CREDITS

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"Creation Account" used with permission of Keri Wehlander © 2003. Contact Keri by e-mail at arrano@island.net.

"Youth Room Prayer" created by the Youth Group at Ryerson United Church, Vancouver.

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