# A Call to Sabbath

Camping Sunday Service ~ April 26, 2015

**Introduction for Leaders:** 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.

**Preparation:**

* As a way to invite people to start thinking about camp, organize a slide show of pictures from [your local camp](http://www.united-church.ca/contact/camps) and have it running as people arrive, or use one of the many camp videos available on the [United Church Camp Playlist](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQDu-SgFb3Ri1rIF6tNeKNU66IiGnINFB) on YouTube.
* *A few weeks before*, invite people to plan on bringing photos of themselves at camp—whether a United Church camp or camping trips they took with family or friends.
* For Call to Worship, have the following items available along with volunteers to bring them forward: a plant, an archer’s bow or a paddle, a Bible, a campfire log, a stick with a piece of white material tied to it like a flag, a CD of nature sounds or Internet connection to a YouTube video of nature picture and sounds, people who have brought photos from their camp, a candle.
* You’ll need a volunteer or two to help you lead the Rainstorm instructions (see Children’s Time).

## Gathering

### Welcome & Introduction

Camping is one of the biggest youth ministries in the United Church. Camps do everything from building campers’ confidence to growing leaders in our church. Each summer at United Church camps, over 20,000 children across Canada come together to create relationship in community; relationships with one another, with creation, and with God.

We recognize this call to Sabbath as a call to make the time and create the space to reconnect with our souls and the Spirit that nourishes us. We invite you to participate in this Camping Sunday service as a time to renew our call to Sabbath—the call to silence the chaos of our lives and re-enter God’s creation.

### Call to Worship

by Maya Landell—from Camping Sunday Service 2002

*[One or two people, preferably children or youth, read the call to worship one line at a time, while other members of the congregation bring up the symbols and place them on the communion table. Place a brightly covered cloth/piece of material over the table.]*

A space to learn and grow

*one person* *brings up a plant*

A space to try new things

*one person* *brings up an archer’s bow or a paddle*

A space to pass on our story

*one person* *brings up a Bible*

A space to connect with nature

*one person* *brings up a campfire log*

A space to forgive and forget

*one person* *brings up a stick with a piece of white material tied to it as a peace flag*

A space to be still and listen

*play a CD of nature sounds—or start a YouTube video of nature pictures and sounds*

*(e.g.,* [*http://youtu.be/hGa0KaNV3tM*](http://youtu.be/hGa0KaNV3tM)*)*

A space to make new friends and build community

*everyone is invited to bring their photos from camp*

A space to connect with God

*one person* *lights a candle*

A space to just be welcome to worship

### Prayer of Approach

by Karen Bridges and Shauna Gibbons—from Camping Sunday Service 2005

*[continue the nature sounds used in the Call to Worship]*

**Creator God, we hear your wilderness cry from the depth of our souls and long to answer. We seek you out in the silence and beauty of nature, in the sound of the birds, the rustling trees, the lapping water, and the crunching of branches. Our eyes and ears are opened to your presence in the newness of day, the brisk air, and the colours of the sunrise. Be with us in this time of storytelling and memories, guiding us along the forest’s edge into oneness with you. May we follow faithfully the way of Jesus in this and all the paths of our lives. Amen.**

### Lighting of the Christ Candle

We light this candle to remind us that we are here in Jesus’ name, and that our faith is like this flame. It flickers and changes, and sometimes needs to be relit, but its brightness can fill a space.

**Hymn:** Breathe on Me, Breath of God (*Voices United* 382)

## We Listen for God’s Word

### Children’s Time: Rainstorm

by Karen Bridges and Shauna Gibbons—from Camping Sunday Service 2005

Did you know that your body is at least 70 percent water? *[To be sure the children understand 70 percent, show them a glass that is about 70 percent full of water.]* Your body is mostly water!

Think about how important water is in your life. How does it feel on a hot summer day when you’re really thirsty, and you get some water to drink? How good does it feel to go swimming? Have you ever run outside when it’s raining, just to feel the rain on your face and dance in the puddles?

Many times at camp we have rainy days when we find new and creative ways to have fun, whether it is with crafts, indoor games, or story time. At camp, water is pretty important—whether it’s drinking water on a hot summer’s day, spraying one another with water during a water fight, canoeing or swimming in a lake or river.

Imagine how you might look or feel without having access to water. Imagine camp without rainy days.

Just like we all need water to drink and water to clean ourselves, we all need to connect with God in nature, in our friendships with each other, and in our own bodies.

We’re now going to create a rainstorm right here in church!

*[Invite children to help you with the following—or invite them to go back and sit with their families. Start on one side of the congregation and ask people to join in gradually with the various moves until the entire congregation is making the same sound. Then start at the beginning with the next sound. Tell the congregation to make the sound until the leader shows them the next move. This will continue like a wave.]*

1. Rub your hands together
2. Snap your fingers
3. Drum on your lap with your hands
4. Stomp on the floor with your feet
5. Drum on your lap with your hands
6. Snap your fingers
7. Rub your hands together
8. End in silence

**Hymn Suggestions:** I’ve Got Peace Like a River (*Voices United* 577)

or All Who Are Thirsty (*More Voices* 4)

### Scripture

Jeremiah 17:7–8

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 42 (*Voices United* 768)

John 4:14

But whoever drinks the water I give them will never be thirsty. The water that I give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

### Message

Adapted from “Called by Earth and Sky” by the Rev. Linda Tomlinson-Seebach, from the 2010 resource [We Are Camp! United Church Camps and Congregations—Partners in Ministry.](http://www.ucrdstore.ca/we-are-camp-united-church-camps-and-congregations-partners-in-ministry.html)

For most of human history, we have been an agrarian society connected to the land. In the past 100 years, however, things have changed. We have rapidly moved from an agrarian society to a post-industrial society. In our move away from the land, we have not only lost our connection with the earth, but also some significant understandings about how we are connected to each other and God through nature.

Before we were—before there were church buildings, committees, pavement, and cell phones—God was. The Spirit of God hovered over an empty void. God’s first act was to create the world, in and through nature. In creating and creation, God brings something mysterious and wonderful to the chaotic void. God creates, orders, and brings light.

I often wonder if we haven’t returned to a kind of void and chaos. Instant communications continuously flash images and sound bites at us. Day and night we are bombarded with so much technology and communication that we are drowning our consciousness, distracted to the point that we thought we could drive and text at the same time.

All this happens under the promise that technology connects us more to each other and the world. Does it? We know more about what is happening globally than we ever did before. You would think that would make us more connected to each other. But are we? Does our knowledge of our neighbour’s need across the city or country, or around the world, cause us to respond? If not, how are we more connected?

With advances in technology, we were promised more leisure time and more chances to spend time with our loved ones. Yet despite all our advances, few of us find the time, or take the time, to watch the sun rise or set unless we are glancing from the window at our workplace. All this disconnection from each other and the earth leads us farther away from God.

The green earth that for most of history was understood to be our mother Gaia, the hand that fed, nurtured, and sustained us, is no longer understood in those terms. Food comes from the grocery store, not the earth. While 11 percent of the global population remain without access to an improved source of drinking water, water has become, like many other things, a commodity to be bought and sold.

In our technologically advanced society, where life is faster than it ever has been before, many of us have lost touch with this Spirit of God that hovered over creation so long ago and still hovers over us today. We have spun ourselves around our global planet to the point that we have forgotten who we are and where we came from. We are dizzy from the turning.

The joy of camping ministry is that it reminds us to return to where we began. In going back to nature we connect with the earth once again. God is there and we can feel the Spirit gently breathing around us, touching our skin, and calling us home.

In the midst of this chaos, returning to the land is all the more important. Where else can we connect again and again to who we are and where we came from? In nature we find simultaneously a retreat from life, a way to return to it, and a path to restoration within it.

The trickle of water as it cascades over rocks—the call of the loon or the owl—can be heard when the televisions, cell phones, computers, cars, and radios are turned off. Not hearing that call might cause us to destroy the very ecosystem that sustained it. The call to Sabbath is no different. Each part of this creation is a part of God. And we, too, are a part of this creation. When one part of this creation suffers, we all do. And creation is moaning because of our indifference.

God is calling us to come home. We can return. This will happen when we consciously decide to tune out everything else.

Do you want to hear the call of the loon again? Do you want to hear God calling you to a deepened relationship with self, creation, and God? Camping ministry is quietly and peacefully calling us back, to return, to come home. Will you join us?

### Hymn Suggestions

O Beautiful Gaia (*More Voices* 41)

Come and Find the Quiet Centre (*Voices United* 374)

Will You Come and Follow Me (*Voices United* 567)

## We Respond in Joy and Faith

### Sharing of Camp Memories

*Ask for a show of hands of people who have attended a United Church or other camp. Invite people to share their memories from camp. Welcome stories from those who attended United Church camps, and those who have experienced camp or creation in other ways. Be open to stories that reflect warm and wonderful memories, as well as those not so positive.*

### Prayer of the People

Robyn Brown Hewitt—from *Celebrate God’s Presence* pg 526

One: Gracious God, you are so good to us.

Today we offer a prayer of thanksgiving

for all of the blessings revealed to us

through Christian camping and outdoor ministries.

For the gifts of your good creation,

which we encounter when we are camping:

for forests and fields, beaches, streams and lakes,

sunrises and sunsets, wind and rain,

All: we give you thanks, O God.

One: For your gift of time and the cycle of nature;

for opportunities in the out-of-doors to reflect,

and to feel your presence very near to us;

for rest and recreation,

All: we give you thanks, O God.

One: For the dedication of countless people

who have supported this ministry

through offerings of time and talent:

builders, counsellors, and instructors;

for the gifts of all who create and maintain

an environment of faithfulness and healing

through their example at camp,

All: we give you thanks, O God.

One: For the blessings you make known to us

through those who participate at camp;

for the questions and discoveries; for the friendships and fun;

for the music and stories,

All: we give you thanks, O God.

One: Bless, O God, the ministry of camps and retreat centres,

a ministry which is ours in Christ’s name.

All: Amen.

### The Lord’s Prayer

### Offering

### Hymn

Isaiah 55—You Shall Go Out With Joy (*Voices United* 884)

### Benediction

We have been reminded today that camp is a gift to us and to the church at large. The stillness of the morning air; the sureness of the earth as our foundation; the joy of the lake, river, or ocean; and the warmth of community around the fire—are all gifts that we receive at United Church camps, and are just a few of the ways by which we can enter into Sabbath.

Go into the world knowing that you are called to still the chaos in your life, and that God provides many resources with which you can achieve that stillness. For that is the good news; we are loved beyond all measure and are provided with all our spirits need.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

*With special thanks to Karen Bridges, Shauna Gibbons, Maya Landell, and Li**nda Tomlinson-Seebach.*