

## Camp Changes Lives!

Camping Sunday Service: April 26, 2020

### Suggestions for Preparation

- A few weeks before the service, invite people to bring photos and mementos of themselves from their camping experience. Install these in a display area before April 27.
- Ask your community for their favourite camp songs and camp stories. Include these in the service.
- Consider setting up a “campsite” at the front of the church or in an area where people congregate. This might include a tent with sleeping bags, a creative (not lit!) “campfire,” a s’mores station, decorative trees—the possibilities are limited only by your creativity!
- Include in the bulletin different ways people can contribute to camp sponsorship programs for your local camps, or through the [Send a Kid to Camp](#) gift in *Gifts with Vision*.
- As people gather for the service, have a slideshow or video running showing images from your local camp or the broader United Church of Canada camp community. Contact your local camp for a slideshow or video. Alternatively, here are some resources:
  - Slideshow of 2019 highlight photos from United Church of Canada camps on [Google Photos](#). Click the three vertical dots at the top right-hand side of the window, and click Slideshow to display on screen. Click on a photo to see the camp/source of photo.
  - [United Church of Canada Camps video playlist](#) (includes 19 videos)
  - Toronto United Church Council’s [Changing Lives](#) Camping Opportunities Endowment Fund video

### WE GATHER

#### Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to Camping Sunday! Today we gather to listen to, talk about, reflect on, and support our United Church camping ministries.

#### Camp Song: Fire’s Burning

(Sheet music available at [Muscorescore](#).)

Campfire can be a meaningful, fun, sacred, and joyful place; it is a highlight of the camp experience for many! “Fire’s Burning” is the opening song for many a campfire. If possible, have this song led by camp staff and campers, and after going through it once or twice, try it in a three- or four-part round.

*Lyrics (public domain):*

Fire’s burning, fire’s burning!  
Draw nearer, draw nearer!  
In the gloaming (*or glowing*), in the gloaming,  
Come sing and be merry!

**Call to Worship: Responsive**

I know you are out there!

**And we do too!**

I can feel you splashing in the lake, so near!

**We can feel you flowing through the trees, right here!**

Shining in the campfire, twinkling in the stars!

**In our song, in our friendships, ever near, never far!**

Come, let us search together and discover!

**Let us worship together and uncover!**

**Opening Hymn**

“It Only Takes a Spark” (*Voices United* 289)

**Opening Prayer: Prayer in Four Directions<sup>1</sup>**

*Determine which direction east, south, west, and north are, and face these directions as they come up in prayer.*

**Each new day we give thanks to the circle of life.**

*(Face the east)* From the east, the direction of the rising sun, we receive peace and light and wisdom and knowledge.

**We give thanks for these gifts, oh God!**

*(Face the south)* From the south comes warmth, guidance, and the beginning and the end of life.

**We give thanks for these gifts, oh God!**

*(Face the west)* From the west comes the rains, purifying waters to sustain all living things.

**We give thanks for these gifts, oh God!**

*(Face the north)* From the north comes the cold and mighty winds, white snows giving us strength and endurance.

**We give thanks for these gifts, oh God!**

*(Look downwards)* From the earth we come and to the earth we shall return.

**We give thanks for these gifts, oh God!**

*(Look upwards)* From the heavens we receive darkness and light, the air of our breath, and messages from our winged creatures.

**We give thanks for your creation, oh God!**

**WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD****Scriptures**

Job 12:7–10, Matthew 6:25–33

*You may also choose to use the lectionary readings or other readings of your choice.*

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted with permission from a prayer gifted to Camp Big Canoe by the Very Reverend Stanley John McKay.

### Children's Time: Capture the Flag

Decide on an item to hide somewhere in the church; hide it before the service (though it is best not to hide it too well!). Have an identical object that you can show so children know what they are looking for. Capture the Flag is a popular and fun game played at many camps. Ask whether children have heard of it, and share what they know. Some things to bring up:

- A flag is hidden in an area.
- Your goal is to try to find that flag.
- You have to bring the flag back to your home.
- There are people who try to tag you while you have or are searching for the flag.

Tell children that there is, in fact, a “flag” that looks like this (*showing your identical item*) hidden somewhere close by, and have them search.

Afterwards, ask:

- What other things do you search for in life? What intangible things do we search for? (*happiness, love, God, etc.*)
- What are some things that get in the way of finding those things? (*fear, hatred, intolerance, etc.*)
- Just like Capture the Flag, many of us are looking hard for things that are hard to find.
- Many things can get in the way and attempt to send us back to the start.
- However, we need to keep searching, and eventually we will come back with the “flag” and share it with those around us!

### Hymn

“I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (VU 577)

### Message/Reflection/Sermon

Camps have a strong history in Canada and in the United Church. We are in a place in history where we now have second-, third-, and even fourth-generation campers going to the same camp their family members went to. We are in a place where we are welcoming many new Canadians to our camps; where camps are welcoming, nurturing, caring, and compassionate places for all people to come and have fun, learn about our connections with each other, and grow.

At camp, we teach our staff that *camp changes lives*. This comes up in leadership training, in staff training before campers arrive, and in so many conversations leading up to camp. It isn’t until camp staff go through a summer and reflect at the end that it really sinks in just how much of an impact camp has on our community.

Our community of United Church Camps across Canada serves thousands of children and families, many of whom would not be able to experience camp without the support of our broader church communities. Churches, UCWs, special interest groups, church leaders, and individuals like you provide support, financial and otherwise, without which these life-changing

experiences may not occur. Thank you for your contributions, and for thinking of ways you can support our camps as we continue to gather strength and build strong communities.

Joe Richards is the Executive Director at Pearce Williams Camp, a United Church camp and retreat centre in Fingal, Ontario. He has summed up beautifully what it means to be a camp counsellor in his “Camp Counsellor’s Manifesto,” below.

*Consider having several people read different parts of this manifesto, or break it down to make links with our everyday lives and challenges. You might show this on a screen—available at Joe’s website, [yoyojoe](http://yoyojoe.com), which also includes poster versions you can download.*

### **Camp Counsellor’s Manifesto<sup>2</sup>**

*by Joe Richards*

I am a summer camp counsellor.

I believe in camp.

I believe in shorts, t-shirts and sandals.

I believe in singing at the table.

I believe everyone should know five games to play on a bus.

I believe in early morning dip (even if I don’t always go).

I believe that if you play with children you will stay childlike.

I believe that camp makes a difference in every camper’s life, as well as my own.

Camp is a place that I can get away from the rush of everyday life and back to the basics.

I come to camp for the campers, but also for myself.

Every camper is an individual and I need to treat them as such.

One method does not work with all campers.

I will strive to find the balance that will help me to see each camper as an individual

And help me to give them each the summer of their lives.

I will remember my favorite counsellors and teachers.

By remembering I draw on the positives of these people to make myself into a better counsellor.

I am the most important person at camp to my campers.

My campers will watch everything that I do and say this summer

So I want to do what is right and say what is good.

Camper see, camper do.

I need help and I will not be afraid to ask for it.

The staff want to see me succeed and will help me to do so, but only if I ask.

Camp is camp because of the people that are there.

I believe that every child should have an opportunity to attend camp at some point in their lives.

Camp is good, no camp is great—in fact, I believe camp is the best place to be.

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<sup>2</sup> With thanks to Joe, [www.yoyojoe.com/camp-counsellors-manifesto](http://www.yoyojoe.com/camp-counsellors-manifesto).

I believe this is going to be the best summer yet.

### Reflection

Ask any of the following questions, giving time for the congregation to think and reflect on their personal responses:

- What intangible things do you search for in life? (*happiness, love, God, etc.*) What are some things that get in the way of finding those things? (*fear, hatred, intolerance, etc.*)
- Think of a time in your life where someone made a conscious choice to do something positive for you that, to them, was a small act, but for you changed your life for the better. Think of how that little act had such an immense impact on your life. What can you do today, this week, this month, that is small but may have a positive impact on our world?
- Think of a time in your life where you felt positively child-like: a carefree sense of wonder, joy, innocence, and happiness. How can you bring that into your life every day? How can you encourage others to do the same?
- As we learn more and more about the ever-changing environment, what small thing can you do this week to lessen our impact and increase our connection to nature?
- Think camp! Think of a camp experience you had, a camp story you heard from someone else, or a camp moment you would like to see happen for someone. What would you like to see in our camp communities? How can you contribute to our strong United Church camping movement?

### Prayers of the People

*You might want to read this poem as part of the prayers:*

#### A Shining

*by Jim Taylor<sup>3</sup>*

Faces talk around a table  
 knees warm around a campfire  
 voices sing in a circle  
 hands clasp in the darkness  
 and in between, among, around them  
 hovers a shining

Eyes cannot see it  
 ears cannot hear it  
 fingers cannot touch it  
 but all feel it

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<sup>3</sup> "A Shining" by Jim Taylor, as published in John McTavish, *Jesus and Elvis: Creative Resources for Schools and Churches* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2019). Reprinted with permission from John McTavish.

deep, deep within

The shining glows  
and pulses  
and sings high and clear  
and tastes sweeter than honey  
whenever two or three  
or four or more—  
humans or trees  
herring or chickadees—  
meet and merge  
in holy harmony

Though there is nothing there  
everyone knows  
something is there  
that can't be explained  
or explained away

I call it God  
What do you call it?

## **Sharing and Blessing of Gifts**

### **Offering**

### **Minute for Mission**

### **Closing Hymn**

“Halle, Halle, Halle” (VU 958)

### **Commissioning and Blessing**

**By Steve Salt**, Executive Director at Camp Big Canoe in Ontario, where he continues to build upon the incredibly legacy of an 86-year history of camping. Steve has lived the Spirit of Camp Big Canoe since his days as a camper and staff member through the early 1990s and into the 2000s. A dedicated outdoor educator, Steve is a camper at heart, a believer in the power of outdoor education and the possibilities of Camp Big Canoe, and a trusted mentor.