



Camp Sunday Service

Why Have a Camp Sunday?

Summer Camp is a transformational experience for children and youth throughout the world. Summer camping experiences allow young people and young at heart to explore themselves and their identities in safe spaces away from the expectations of families, friends, and societal pressures. Summer Church Camp allows children, youth and adults not only to explore their own identity but also their identity in relation to our Creator God, while also learning to live authentically in a community with other Christians their age. Camp Sunday is a way to introduce camp to new campers and volunteers.

We also encourage congregations to have retreats for all ages throughout the year. Please promote these at this time as well.

Below you will find suggestions on ways that you can incorporate camp into a weekly worship service. Our hope is that Camp Sunday will drive new and continued interest in summer camping, while also helping former campers see that their experiences at camp can and do relate back to their daily faith, and church community.

Ways to create the experience:

- Designate one Sunday annually as Camp Sunday. Make it a consistent Sunday, like the last Sunday in February, or the Sunday before or after Earth Day (tied in with Earth Justice) for example.
- Consider bringing camp themes decorations into the sanctuary:
 - Tent, sleeping bags, campfire (fire ring), cardboard cutouts of trees. [Click here for examples.](#)
- Invite/encourage congregational involvement, especially youth and camp alum.
- Here is [a link to a video](#) that can be shown to get the experience of summer camp.
- Click [here](#) to find bulletin inserts, videos, posters, and other resources for 2024 summer camp.

Worship Suggestions

Words of Welcome:

Friends, in the name of the One who welcomes all, I welcome you today to our Camp Sunday Celebration here at [Church's Name]. From the beginning of Creation, we as the beloved of God have been called to steward and love the earth. One of the ways that we can fulfill our call to stewardship is through learning about the earth and deepening our connections to the Earth. Camp is one of the ways that we can help deepen our connection to the earth, to our Creator and to others inside of our Christian Faith. Every summer CAMP is a special time and place where youth and adults alike can create new, life-giving Communities, practice Acceptance of self and of others, learn how to be and live their lives Mindfully, and deepen their faith through Prayer. So today, in this time and place that is special to our community of believers, we invite you to join our celebrations of the sacred time and space that is CAMP. So whether you are new to this church or you have been coming since you were born, whether you have been to camp every year or it has been something you have always wanted to try, whether you are new to faith like the sapling, or your faith is great like the mighty oak, here in this place you are loved and your celebrated for you are a child of God, made perfectly in the Creator's image.

Call to Worship

One: The Spirit of the Living God



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All: Can be found, in every tree and bough.

One: In babbling brooks and nature's songs,

All: God's voice can be heard in echoing calls.

One: At camp with friends both old and new

All: God's loving presence is made real.

Or:

One: We gather to celebrate God's many deeds,

All: God's greatness can be seen in all things big and small.

One: We gather to celebrate God's still speaking voice,

All: God's voice calls to us leading us ever closer to them.

One: We have come to celebrate God's sacred, thin spaces,

All: God's presence in these places feels closer than ever before.

Opening Hymn

- Sanctuary, Oasis Worship (Contemporary)
- Here I am to Worship (Contemporary)
- Come, Now is the Time to Worship (Contemporary)
- All things Bright and Beautiful
- Every Time I Feel the Spirit
- In the Bulb There is a Flower

Opening Prayer/ Prayer of Invocation

God of the trees, the birds, the rivers and streams, we come before you this day hearing your call in our lives to be better stewards to creation. In this place of constructed beauty today, we join you in celebrating all the natural beauty of your earth, mourning the ways we have abused it for our own ends and raising up to you our special pieces of creation in this House of Worship and our camp Templed Hills. God of all Creation draw alongside us as we open our hearts and our minds to you and your ways. Amen.

Or:

We come together today praising the God of Creation, whose voice was heard ordering chaos and speaking the Word of life which illuminated an eternal darkness for the first time. We come today praising our Creator God to whom we have belonged, even before Their Spirit hovered over the waters that now seal us in eternal covenant. God is our sustainer and our light; may all creation adore them. Amen.



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Thoughts for the Young

What's Important?

Invite children and adults to call out what is the most important thing about camp. (You may want to “prime the pump” by telling kids a little bit about what camp is like.)

After people name the various aspects of camp say: Listen, listen to all of the different things people think are most important about camp...it's important to spend time outside...s'mores are important ...I heard canoeing...campfires...being with friends and making new friends...learning about God...trying new things...mosquitoes...

Then ask: Wait, I am really confused... How can all of these things be the most important thing about camp?

Maybe it's because people are different, so what they think is important is different, too. I wouldn't want to leave out any of these things—except maybe the mosquitoes. What I love about camp and what I think is most important is that so many different people come together and form a big, loving community. Even though they might be completely different, they are all having a great time at camp. I hope when you go to camp you will look around at all the wonderful people and all of the exciting things about camp and say thank you to God for our differences!

Did you know, saying thank you to God for our differences is something we can do anytime. Let's do it right now. On the count of three everyone say, “Thank you, God, for our differences.” One, two, three... “THANK YOU, GOD, FOR OUR DIFFERENCES.”

Or:

Rainstorm

When I talk to new campers about why they are nervous to come to camp often they say that they are afraid of rainstorms. Which is totally understandable I remember when I was young getting nervous about rainstorms too. Especially, when they were big, loud storms.

But rainstorms are an important part of the water cycle and way that the earth refreshes itself. I mean water is super important to our lives. What are some ways that we use water?

These are all really great examples... you drink it when you're really thirsty, you can go swimming in it, you can play in puddles when it's raining or after a rainstorm.

Sometimes at camps we can have rainy day and we have to find ways to fill our time like crafts, games, or movies, or story time. And it can be scary to hear all those big sounds and noises in a place where you aren't familiar but imagine how you might look or feel without having access to water, without rainy days. I don't know if it would be a very pretty place.

So just like water can be really fun and helpful to us and our lives, the rain is a really important part of nature, and it helps keep places like camp and parks green and beautiful. The rain is very important, and you know what else is important? Learning about God's creation the earth and learning how to be a good caretaker to the earth by going to places like camp where we can be close to God and Creation.



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One way I like to help kids feel more comfortable in case it does rain is by having them create a rainstorm. Have you ever made a rainstorm before? No well, we're now going to create a rainstorm right here in church are you ready?

[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

Or:

All God's Creatures

Consider inviting a local wildlife program to come and talk to the children about different animals, and if they are able bringing animals with them that the children can interact with. If this is not possible consider getting toy animals to bring up with you.

At camp we sing this song called All God's Creatures it is a funny song, and one that come with different motions even some silly sounds. (Consider singing/playing part of the song for the kids.) Everyone loves to sing this song, and it is definitely one of my favorites. Can you guess why?

Well, the reason I really love it is because we can often forget that God made and loves all the creatures of the earth not just humans. At camp we are confronted by all kinds of other Creatures of God can you name a few?

These are all really great examples! Now I would like to introduce you to some friends of mine... (At this point either introduce your guests or introduce your animal toys friends. If using animal toys, it can be helpful to bring animals like amphibians, reptiles, or insects.)

Do you think these animals are important to God and God's creation? ... Of course, they are they all play a special role in creation from eating bugs that could be harmful to us or to our crops, to helping us know whether different ecosystems like rivers and grasslands are healthy. And God calls us to love and care for all of God's creatures... even the ones we may find gross or scary.

Can we pray together? Okay repeat after me: Creator God... You call us... to care for... your creation... even the parts... that we don't find pretty... Help us to be... better caretakes for creation... and to shine your light... to all your creatures... Amen.



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Litany

Templed Hills – Our Sacred Celebration by Rev. Eric Williams, Heartland Conference

One: We celebrate sacred spaces...

Two: Of towering pines and rolling hills, of big sky stars and crackling campfires.

One: We celebrate sacred times...

Two: Of playing and swimming together, of singing and praying as one, of laughing and learning with trusted friends.

One: We celebrate sacred presence...

Two: Received and embraced in the fullness of silence, shared in the hearts of young and old.

One: We celebrate sacred communities...

Two: Of extravagant welcome and personal safety, gathering as friends of Jesus and members of Christ's church.

One: We celebrate sacred discoveries...

Two: Of quiet listening and deep seeing, of seeking what is true and celebrating spiritual growth.

One: We celebrate sacred journeys...

Two: To a place we set apart that brings us together, that invites us to grow within and beyond.

One: We celebrate sacred promises...

Two: That bind us together as the family of God and as stewards of God's good earth.

One: We celebrate our sacred camp...

Two: Our beloved community, where love and acceptance greet you, where caring and kindness is practiced, where faith is formed and spirituality is deepened. Together, we celebrate our Templed Hills.

Readings

Community (teamwork, cooperation)

1 Corinthians 12:14-20 *The body of Christ. Vs. ¹⁴ For the body is not made up of only one part, but of many parts...¹⁹ There would not be a body if it were all only one part!²⁰ As it is, there are many parts but one body.*

Acceptance (love, empathy, inclusive, kindness, caring)

Ephesians 4:2 *Be always humble, gentle, and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another.*

Mindfulness (kindness, caring, responsibility, stewardship, self-control)

Galatians 5:22-23 *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

Prayer (spirituality, faith formation, worship)

Philippians 4:6 *Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need. Thank him for all he has done.*



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Sermon/Message

The Lasting Impact of Camp

For this part of the service consider having current or former campers share with the congregation about their experiences at camp, and the lasting impacts camp has had on their life.

If you don't have former or current campers consider inviting Executive Director of Outdoor Ministries, Jill Frey to come speak, or if she has suggestions for camper/volunteers in your local area who might be willing to come speak.

- Did you know those who attend camp as youth are significantly more likely to continue participating in community religious practices as young adults, including church attendance, than those who did not attend camp?
- The [American Camp Association](#) also has some great facts and statistics about the lasting impacts of camp on a child's life.
- Also check out how campers grew in 2022 at Templed hills found in [the toolkit](#).

Hymn/Song

- Graves into Gardens (Contemporary)
- I Don't Want to Miss It (Contemporary)
- Oceans (Contemporary)
- Many and Great
- For the Beauty of the Earth
- All Creatures of our God and King

Pastoral Prayer/Prayers with the People

O redeeming, loving God, we come into your presence today with our hearts filled with prayers for the world. God of grace and mercy hear our prayers.

We pray for those who are beloved to us. Whether they be healthy or ill, thriving or struggling, at peace or tossed by the tumults of life. God of all loving kindness support those who suffer and comfort those who mourn. Bring rest to the sick and help guide the hands and minds of all the caregivers who work to help them heal.

We pray for this community of [community name], [areas that need prayer i.e., social justice, reforms, etc.]. We pray for our greater church {Association} and the Heartland Conference. May our church continue to do the work of raise up the oppressed, advocating for those without a voice, and showing forth your love to all.

Loving God we raise up to you all those who are suffer at the hands of people meant to love and care for them, and we ask that you protect those who are persecuted, defend those who live on the outskirts. May they receive your love and guidance today.

We pray for all peoples of the earth. God of new creations we pray for the dismantling of systems of injustice that are at work in our world. We pray for the destruction of weapons of violence so that all may live in dignity and peace. Come, oh savior come and help us as we continue your work to make all things new.

We pray for the earth itself and for its restoration. Help us as we continue to advocate and protect your creation from destruction, purify the water, air and soil so that the earth may once again sing your praises without burden. We



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especially raise up to you our sacred places like Templed Hills that through these places we may come to learn how to be better stewards of your world. God of Grace and Mercy Hear our prayer.

God of all that was, all that is, and all that is to come. You are the source of all loving kindness in this world and we pray that you help us your church to be a beacon of that light and love in the world. Help us to listen for your voice and the ways that it is calling to us and help us to fight against our temptation to supplant our own wills and desires above yours. In your most holy and loving name, we pray. Amen.

Or:

Leader: With all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord. For the peace from above, for the loving-kindness of God, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For the peace of the world, for the welfare of the Holy Church of God, and for the unity of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For the leaders of the nations, and for all in authority, as they try to lead and protect all their people amidst times of uncertainty let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For our (Church/City Name) Community, for the Heartland Conference, for all the communities of campers and volunteers who will attend camps at Templed Hills this summer, as well as every community throughout the world let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For good weather, the sun that warm, the clouds that shade, the rain that brings new life, and for an abundance of crops to feed us, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For the good earth which God has given us, the beauty and grandeur of nature, all the creatures of the land and sea, as well as for the wisdom and will to conserve God's creation, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For the aged and infirmed, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and the suffering all over the world, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For the poor and the oppressed, for our Black and Brown siblings and all who still fight for their rights, both here and abroad, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For all who have died in the hope of the life ever after, and for all the departed, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For deliverance from all danger, violence, oppression, and degradation, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, in your mercy hear our pray.

Leader: For all these things, Lord, we cry out and we pray to you, for we know that you are a God who great wisdom and immense love. Lord, hear our prayer

All: Amen



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Invitation to Offering

This would be a great Sunday to consider hosting a special offering to either your churches campership funds to help financially assist more children going to camp, or to make a special donation to Templed Hills. You may also wish to [share this video](#) (if you are able) as a way of showing the congregation the great works our summer camps do.

Through the gift of God's Creation we have been given abundance of materials, abundance of food sources, and an abundance of beauty. Through God's grace and love we have also been given an abundance of Spiritual Gifts. With gratitude to God for all the gifts we have received, today we are being invited to consider how we may give of our time, our talents, and of our treasures, so that we may join with God in this abundant giving of love. Our gifts will now be graciously received.

Prayer of Dedication

Creator, Sustainer God, we give you thanks this day for these gifts which we offer to you never-ending work of abundant love. May our gifts given this day with gracious hearts help us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with all those we meet. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Closing Hymn/Song

- Draw the Circle Wide, The Common Cup Company (Contemporary)
- Go Light Your World (Contemporary)
- Build Your Kingdom Here (Contemporary)
- Pass it On
- Take My Life and Let it Be
- Come and Find the Quiet Center
- Peace Like a River

Benediction

Traditional Irish Blessing

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sunshine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Or:



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Siblings in Christ,

Let us go forth this day to stand in God's holy place, so that we may—

Care for the sick and weak

Uplift the poor and outcast

Cherish the creatures of nature

Live in harmony with each other and with the Earth

So that every place may feel close to you as our sacred places like camp. Amen

Other Suggestions:

- Consider having an informational booth in your fellowship hall, during coffee hour.
 - Ask previous campers and parents to share photos and help cover the booth to talk to new families. Let families know if you have a church scholarship fund to help pay camp fees and how they access it.
- Post the camp poster and leave it up.
- Create a bulletin insert from the information below.
- Celebrate Templed Hills year-round by:
 - Hosting weekend retreats
 - Bringing a group to help with maintenance
 - Hosting a Sunday Service
 - Having a family reunion/friends outing
- Did you know faith formation at camp can happen at all ages? Check the [Lantern Women's Fellowship](#) for example. This event is for all women in the conference and happens in April and September of each year. Information for the next event will be posted soon.
- Visit the [Heartland Conference Website](#) for more resources.
- Invite Jill Frey, Executive Director of Outdoor Ministries, to your worship to help lead any portion of the service as needed as well as visit during coffee hour. She can also bring camp songbooks and make suggestions for songs from that if preferred.

Special Thanks for creating this resource To:

Bobby Burtt, Associate Minister for Young Adults and Families with Children, First Congregational Church of Akron



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What is CAMP? Fun, Faith, Community!

Camp is a special experience where we gather and learn how-to live-in community, growing as faithful disciples and responsible stewards, following Jesus' call to extravagantly love all God's children and creation.

CAMP = Fun Faith Community

Community (teamwork, cooperation)

1 Corinthians 12:14-20 *The body of Christ. Vs. ¹⁴ For the body is not made up of only one part, but of many parts...¹⁹ There would not be a body if it were all only one part!²⁰ As it is, there are many parts but one body.*

- **Cooperation** - Camper's ability to establish new relationships, maintain positive relationships and friendships, avoid social isolation, resolve conflicts, accept differences, be a contributing member of the group and camp as a whole, and work productively and collaboratively with others.

Acceptance (love, empathy, inclusive, kindness, caring)

Ephesians 4:2 *Be always humble, gentle, and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another.*

- **Love** – Campers' ability to see the need of others and respond to it, following Jesus' call to extravagantly love all God's children.
- **Empathy**- Camper's ability to "see into" (recognize, understand) another state of mind and emotions and be receptive to new ideas and perspectives; to appreciate and value differences and diversity in others.

Mindfulness (kindness, caring, responsibility, stewardship, self-control)

Galatians 5:22-23 *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

- **Responsibility/stewardship**- Camper's ability to motivate themselves to take action and follow through on expectations; to define a problem, consider the consequences, and choose a positive solution for all involved; to stand up for their ideas without hurting or negating others; to become responsible stewards of creation.
- **Self-Control**- Campers' ability to pause and feel the energy of God; a deeper quiet to rest and listen; use what they hear to recognize and attend their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to be lovingly faithful to the will and way of Jesus Christ.

Prayer (spirituality, faith formation, worship)

Philippians 4:6 *Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need. Thank him for all he has done.*

- **Learn it** – Campers learn more of the sacred story/texts.
- **Live it** - Campers model their behaviors after the positive examples of the message in the sacred texts.
- **Share it** – Campers reflect on what they learn, live, and notice, sharing their reflection and discovery with others.
- **Loved by God** – Campers experience the energy of being close to God and grow in the depth of their understanding that they are loved unconditionally by God. That understanding is branded in them strong enough that it will not fade. A strong memory remains that no matter what, they know they are loved by God.

