

## About these Resource

You are warmly invited to use this resource as a starting point for shaping a worship service that is meaningful and authentic to your community. Whether you follow it closely or adapt it freely, we encourage you to make it your own—adding local stories, voices, images, and traditions that reflect the unique spirit of your congregation and camp connections.

May this offering spark creativity, deepen connection, and support you as you craft a service that celebrates God’s work among you in ways that feel alive, inclusive, and grounded in your shared context.

*These resources were created by Anna Sparks, Rev. Ryan Tristin Chapman, and First Third Ministry Staff – Tasha Whitney and Sarah Provan*

## Things to Consider

- If your congregation is located near a United Church camp, we encourage you to invite a member of the camp board or staff to join your worship service and offer a few words about what is unfolding at the camp this coming summer. Hearing directly from those connected to the day-to-day life of the camp can deepen the congregation’s sense of relationship and shared ministry and help bring the wider church’s camping ministry to life. We also invite you to name that specific camp in your Blessings of Camp or Prayers of the People, holding its campers, staff, volunteers, and leaders in prayer as the season approaches.
- **Creating your Worship Slides:** Feel free to use the slide templates we created as part of this resource. Photos for slides in this resource are from UCC camps and archives. Feel free to insert your own camp-specific slides as well. Consider who in your congregation might have photos from time spent at camp that could be shared in the presentation, or images that reflect your community’s relationship with camping ministry.
- You may want to invite folks to bring in their camp memorabilia—such as photos, t-shirts, cabin signs, or songbooks—to share during coffee hour after worship, creating space for storytelling and connection.
- **MUSIC:** Throughout the resource you will find suggested hymns from Voices United and More Voices. If you have congregation members who have spent lots of time at camp and would be comfortable sharing campfire songs, that is a great addition. Most campfire songs are simple call and response and can be easily taught to the congregation. Ideas include:
  - Fill Up My Cup - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXZhYluYiYQ>
  - Peace Like a River
  - This Little Light of Mine

## Welcome, Candle Lighting and Opening Prayers

### Welcome

Today is the last Sunday in April, and in the United Church, it is our tradition to spend this Sunday celebrating the ministry that happens in our United Church Camps. Camping Ministry is one of the important ways The United Church of Canada serves and supports young people. Across the country, thousands of children and youth gather at United Church camps to spend time in community, in creation, strengthening their connection to the Creator God.

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*If your community of faith supports a particular camp, name the camp here and share a sentence or two about the significance of your relationship between the camp and your congregation. You may also wish to share the names of all of the UCC Camps in your region. Find out more information about these camps from your region's website.*

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United Church Camps give children an opportunity to truly be themselves and be celebrated for their skills and talents. They are encouraged to connect with creation, as well as experiencing what it's like to live in an immersive community. At United Church camps, silliness and fun build connection and demonstrate intergenerational care and respect - respect for one another, creation and our Creator. United Church camps are places where youth are encouraged to be role models and develop their skills as leaders in their communities.

Today we gather to celebrate the work of God that is done through our camps.

### Territorial Acknowledgement

We gather today on the land that has been home to Indigenous people for thousands of years, since time immemorial.

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*Please add regionally specific names. If you are looking for this information for your church or for the camp nearest you, you can check <https://www.whose.land/en/where-am-i>*

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We are grateful for their ongoing stewardship of and relationship with the land. On this day where we celebrate our connection to creation and the land through camping, we acknowledge that Indigenous people in our communities and in our camps have a connection to the land. This connection is deep and rooted in a generations-long relationship with the land on which we live, worship and camp.

## Opening Hymn Suggestions

- *Dance with the Spirit* (MV 156)
- *Open our Hearts* (MV 21)
- *It's a Song of Praise to the Maker* (MV 30)

## Lighting the Christ Candle

We light the Christ Candle to remind us of the light that is always with us when we gather. As we light this candle, we remember the many times people have gathered around a flame at camps, to share songs and stories. This flame is a reminder of that gathering, of the lives that are transformed by being at camp together, and of God's love that shows itself to us when we gather and commune with all of creation.

## Call to Worship

One: We come together today, sharing memories of camp and camping, of time spent outdoors, and of all the ways in which creation connects us to the Creator.

**All: We come to sing, dance, and play.**

One: We gather our memories, our joy, and our passions. We come to support one another, and to uplift upcoming generations in community co-creation.

**All: We come to listen, learn, and pray. We gather round with Love at the centre.**

## Hymn Suggestion

- *A Light is Gleaming* (VU 82)
- *As a Fire* (VU 578)
- *It Only Takes a Spark* (VU 289)

## Prayer of Unburdening

Holy One, as we come together today, we set aside the worries and unfinished thoughts we carry with us. This time together is sacred. We have not always felt like we are enough, strong enough, hardworking enough, kind enough.

But we know that we are enough in your eyes. We know that even when we feel far from you, your love surrounds us. Thanks be to God.

## Prayer of Assurance

God, as we teach each of our campers, we are all your beloved children. Remind us that we are blessed and help us to carry forth your blessing and grace to those we meet. Help us hold one another in prayer and maintain our connection to you: through living out our prayer in our day to day lives. Help us to carry the majesty of your camps in our hearts and minds. We remember the land

you created, and those who came before us and lived with respect and balance with creation. We pray in your name, O God, Amen.

## Hymn Suggestions

- *Like a Rock* (MV 92)
- *River* (MV 3)

## Scripture Suggestions

Instead of reading the scripture from the Bible, consider bringing the story to life in a way that echoes the spirit of camp. Gather the congregation around a campfire set up in your worship space—real or symbolic—and invite someone to tell the story from memory, as it might be shared around a fire at camp. Hearing the story told aloud, with warmth and imagination, can help people of all ages engage more deeply, reminding us that the story of our faith has long been shared through lived experience, storytelling, and community.

- Psalm 63 (VU 781)
- Matthew 19: 13-14
- Luke 15 3-7
- John 1 7-8

One: Hear what the spirit is saying to the church

**All: Thanks be to God**

## Reflection

Using your chosen scripture as a guide, you may wish to shape a time of reflection by building on one of the following ideas:

- Invite one or more members of the congregation to share a story about a time at camp when the community helped them feel safe enough to try something new, grow in confidence, experience God's presence, or discover they were deeply loved—and called to love others.
- Share "What does Camp mean to you" video or local camp's summer highlight reel.
- Share the story, *Ram the Lamb* (created by Sarah Provan for First Third's Camping Curriculum, 2026)

We invite you to hold these questions with others or in your own heart as we reflect on how our camp deepen connection to faith and community.

- What is something camp does that helps people feel like they belong in a community of faith?
- How can being part of a caring community—like camp—help people grow in confidence or faith?

- In what ways does camp help people feel connected to God, to creation, and to one another?
- What lessons about kindness, welcome, or care can our congregation learn from camp ministry?
- How can we support camp ministry as a way of nurturing strong faith and community for all ages?

## Hymn Suggestions

- *Jump For Joy* (MV 48)
- *Oh a Song Must Rise* (MV 142)

## Blessing Camp

When we gather outdoors, we can reconnect with creation and creator.  
From church camps to retreats, from Wild Church to outdoor services,  
Your people gather on the land, on Your shores, and give thanks for you, O God.  
Our camps offer a contemplative, immersive experience,  
And allow us to connect with one another with joyful exuberance.  
Thank you, Holy One, for these opportunities.  
We give thanks for the daily reminders of creation  
That we are not alone, that God's majesty spans the globe,  
That all living things sing God's praises.  
May we continue to support our camps  
So that ways of living in interconnected community  
Remind us we are all interdependent,  
That we are a part of creation, not separate or set apart.  
May we fill childhoods with the call of the loon,  
The twittering of birds, waves lapping, and the scurrying of squirrels.  
May our youth grow up to support the old growth forests,  
Because they value their time at camp.  
May camp continue to inspire all those who attend,  
And may Your Good News be shared and remembered,  
Your Grace offered with excitement,  
And your Love shared freely.  
We give thanks for the opening of hearts, minds, and spirits at our camps,  
And pray that we can remember our time communing with nature  
With fondness, reminding us that your Spirit is always with us,  
And that the natural world is filled with your presence, O God.  
Amen.

## Prayers of the People

Holy One, we give thanks for your creation.  
We lift up those connected to you and your creation

And those who are seeking out their own connection to spirit and community.  
We gather alongside the great communion of witnesses:  
To bless and be a blessing,  
To live in harmony with nature,  
And to learn to harmonize with one another.

Camp can be a place where children, youth, and young adults learn to co-exist and work together.  
May we follow their example, remembering that we are not alone,  
Reaching out to you in song  
Connecting with one another in community.  
Help us to play as well as pray, O God.  
Help us to connect with one another  
Be with us as we pray,  
and stay with us,  
and all those who gather at our camps,  
Now and forever,  
We gather as Jesus gathered his disciples,  
To pray the prayer he taught them:

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*(Insert Lord's Prayer of your choice – we suggest the New Zealand Prayerbook  
Version)*

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## Offering

### Invitation to Offering

Your contributions help make ministry happen. Without each of you, our church would not be the same. You each bring unique gifts of time, talent, and treasure. While we collect and bless our physical, financial offering, we give thanks to each of you for all you give to the church and community.

May our nurturing of those connected with creation through our camps lead to the formation of life-long bonds of friendship, empower those learning to lead, and enrich our society with more connected, active, and joyful children, youth, and young adults. It is time to collect our offering and give thanks for all God offers to us.

## Offertory Hymn Suggestions

- *Where Two or Three Are Gathered* (MV 14)
- *Come Touch Our Hearts* (MV 12)

### Prayer of Dedication

Spirit God, you bring us together today to pray and praise your name, to lift our voices in song, to give thanks to You, and share our gratitude for our time together. Be with us as we uphold our camp ministry, our up-and-coming leaders, and future generations of believers, connected to your wild spirit and grounded in the serenity of your creation. May we continue to support these camps and campers, staff, leaders and leaders-in-training, and may you bless every child who moves through our camps. We dedicate this offering to the growth of connection with creation, and connection in community. May the faith formation we offer uplift generations of believers.

## Commissioning and Blessing

### Closing Prayer

Dear God, you know us through and through. We are grateful for your love, which calls people home to camps across the country. We are so grateful that the feeling of finally being at home, known, and loved is one shared by thousands of campers. We pray that like that one lost sheep, your love will find each of us and bring us to the place where we belong. In Jesus name...

**All: Amen**

### Closing Hymn Suggestions

- *Dance with the Spirit* (MV 156)
- *O Let the Power Fall on Me* (MV 13)
- *I Have Called You by Your Name* (MV 161)

### Commissioning

God helps us remember that we are a part of creation: not separate or apart from the Creator but intertwined with the Spirit and with all life on Earth. May we remember the ground beneath our feet, and the sky that soars overhead. May we remember the babbling brook, the shoreline lapping at our feet, and the birds that sing overhead in rich, deep forests of your Creation. As we carry the Good News with us in our hearts, may we also carry the ministry of our United Church Camps: both the hard work of operating and sustaining them, and the joy of gathering in a place set aside for faithful friends. May our camps continue to be a blessing,

### Blessing

May God be with us, as She is with everyone who passes through our camps, our churches, and Her glorious creation.

May we be held with the love Christ. May we demonstrate our love of creation daily in our tender care for all living things. May we be as inspired as Jesus' disciples, ready to share the Love and Light of Christ. We ask for blessings to fortify our camps for future generations.

May we be grounded in God's Earth, inspired by the Spirit's might, and confident in Christ's care.

**Gather Round**  
Camping Sunday 2026  
Worship Resources

**All: Amen**