



It only Takes a Spark...

Camp Sunday: *A Guide for Worship Planners*

The Board of the Mennonite Camping Association (MCA) offers this guide to help you plan a special worship service that celebrates the ministry of camping both in your congregation and in the broader Mennonite Church.

We encourage you to plan a "Camp Sunday" before the summer camping program begins. Involve as many people as you can: former and future campers, present camp staff, and other enthusiastic supporters of the camping/retreat ministries in your area. This group will in effect be the worship team that provides the call to worship, the drama scenes that accompany the scripture texts, sharing of stories and/or personal experiences, offering, and music leadership. If you don't have camping people in your congregation, invite staff from your closest Mennonite camp to join you in worship and lend a hand.

May the light of the triune God shine in you and through you in your planning and celebration of this unique and wonderful outdoor ministry.

Mennonite Camping Association

Established in 1960, MCA serves as a clearing house for directing and promoting Christian camping among Anabaptist/Mennonite conferences and congregations throughout Canada and the United States. MCA continues to strengthen outdoor ministries whose beginnings among Anabaptists in North America date back to the 1920's. Membership in MCA provides a united voice for addressing camping concerns to the church and, in turn, gives the church a channel for relating to retreat and camping ministries. Supplementing and expanding congregational nurture, camps and retreat centers with an Anabaptist heritage and foundation band together through MCA to promote nourishing spiritual experiences, wholesome relationships and a vision for caring for God's worlds.

A Vision for Mennonite Camping

Mennonite Camping Association claims the overall statement of Vision: Healing and Hope adopted by the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church. This vision states:

"God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."

Uniquely, Mennonite Camping Association provides leadership to our camp and church communities on a journey of transformation through:

**Seeking God's face in creation,
Receiving God's Love in Christ,
Radiating God's Spirit in the world.**

In a busy, fragmented world, the camp/retreat environment offers all participants, staff and volunteers an opportunity to experience the meaning of living the church of Christ in a holistic way. Our camp/retreat programs and settings provide, within a limited space of time, a fully integrated experience of being the church. We take Christ's teachings and attempt to model them in every aspect of daily life. We apply these teachings within the Church, within society and within nature. Our camps and retreat centers directly reflect the Anabaptist/Mennonite theology of Christ's peace and love as central to the gospel message. Care of the earth has become for us an extension of Christ's ministry.



Camp Sunday

A Guide for Worship Planners



Notes: Unless otherwise stated, the song titles are taken from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.
Insert any other necessary or regular worship components in the places that fit in your usual practices.
On the back page you will find the Litany for the Commissioning Service as well as a word search and maze for those that may want to include something for the children.

It Gathering

Only Takes a Spark...

Visual Call to Worship:

Processional: Have an inter-generational group, dressed casually, enter from the back singing the song, "Pass it on," and carrying pieces of wood, stones, a large white pillar (Christ) candle, and taper candles in "fire" colors (orange, red, and yellow). Create a campfire with the Christ candle in the centre, surrounded by wood, then stones. The colored candles are placed within the campfire circle. After the campfire is created, this group leads the congregation in the spoken call to worship.

Call to Worship: # 684 (read responsively)

Invocation:

Creator God, you have called us to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that your healing and hope can flow through us to the world. As we celebrate the church's unique ministry of camping and retreats, we ask you to shine your love on all of creation, including us; grace us with genuine Christian community, and send us on our way by your radiating Spirit. Amen.

Hymns of Praise: Choose hymns that celebrate God's creation

I sing the mighty power of God # 46
All creatures of our God and King # 48
Praise the Lord, sing hallelujah # 50
Let the whole creation cry # 51
Immortal, invisible, God only wise # 70
For the beauty of the earth # 89
All things bright and beautiful # 156

From Other Sources

How great thou art # 535 *The Mennonite Hymnal*
Pass it on # 100 *Sing and Be Glad*
Carry the Light # 143 *Songs for Praise and Worship*
Song for the nations # 657 *Worship Together*

Message: Camping Ministry - A Three Part Harmony

The outline for the message stems from MCA's vision statement: "Seeing God's face in creation, receiving God's love in Christ, radiating God's Spirit in the world." Use all or part of each section, depending upon the time you have for the service.

Part A: Seeking God's Face in Creation

Scripture Text: Exodus 3:1-6. During the reading, someone mimes the action, then lights the Christ candle.

Commentary: Moses responded to God's call to be a "camp director" for the people who were wandering in the wilderness. He was a shepherd when God chose to be revealed through nature (theophany) in a bush that would not be consumed by holy fire. Talk about the holy moments that can happen in retreat and camp settings as we seek God's face and attend to God's call to serve.

Story: A camper or staff shares a story of experiencing God through worship, prayer, solitude, scripture study, reflection, outdoor discovery or play. How was God's face of love revealed?

Song: Still I search for my God, # 88 (*Pause for a minute of silent reflection after this song.*)

Music Sources:



Sing and Be Glad (Faith and Life Press, 1986)
Sing and Rejoice (Herald Press, 1979)
Worship Together (Board of Faith and Life, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1995)
Spirit of Singing (Woodlake Books, 1994)
Purple Book: Praise Chorus Book, expanded 2nd edition (Maranatha! Music)
Songs for Praise and Worship (Word)

Part B: Receiving God's Love in Christ

Scripture Text: John 21:1-15, 19b.

A "cabin group" re-enacts this story. At the end, they light the colored candles in the campfire.

Commentary: Jesus would have been a model camp counsellor. Much of his ministry happened outdoors and in caring conversations (Zacchaeus in a tree, woman at the well, children playing, people fishing). In this story, we learn that all of camp life is ministry - during meal times, early in the morning, in casual conversations. Jesus was a friend and companion to his small group. He showed acceptance, offered a sense of belonging, and brought healing and hope when they felt despair. Under Jesus' spiritual direction, this small band of disciples became a caring Christian community that began to live out Jesus' teaching and example wherever they went. The spark of Jesus' light, a reflection of God's shining love, was passed on to Jesus' cabin group to follow his lead and be "light to the world."

Story: Camper or staff tell story of the formation of community developed in a camp/retreat setting that strengthened relationships with Christ and fellow campers/retreatants.

Song: Lord, the light of your love (Shine, Jesus Shine) #259 *Maranatha Music Praise Chorus Book* (2nd edition)

Part C: Radiating God's Spirit in the World

Scripture Text: Acts 2:1-4, 14, 17-19.

As the text is read, the worship team goes to the campfire, and takes the colored candles and holds them out in front as they form a circle around the campfire (or face the congregation).

Commentary: God's love is understood in any language, as was evident at Pentecost. And God's love, experienced in community, leads us outward in ministry to a broken world. The inspiration that comes from seeking God's face in creation and receiving God's love in Christ enables participants to be and become a shining witness to the world wherever they are.

Stories: Persons holding the candles step forward in turn and share one specific way they can radiate God's love in their home and neighbourhood by: being a peacemaker; caring for the earth/environment; being a prophetic voice to the church about materialism/consumerism; sharing the good news that Jesus brought; living in harmony with God and all of creation. Return the candles after the stories.

Song: I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing (pray, shout, cry, play, speak, clap, etc.)
46 *Sing and Rejoice*

Commissioning Service [see insert back page]*

All camp staff, campers, other supporters of camp/retreat ministries are invited to stand around the campfire. If possible, have the congregation surround them in a large circle.

Song of Response: Pass it On # 100 *Sing and be Glad*

Offering: Conduct a special offering for your local Mennonite church camp, or have a loose change offering to send a care package to summer camp staff.

Sending

Sending Song: You shall go out with joy # 427
In a recessional the worship team takes the Christ candle and coloured candles out of the sanctuary. As people leave, they distribute small coloured (unlit) birthday candles to each person with the blessing: "Share the light of Christ with someone this week."

Benediction: # 772

* **Note:** *The Commissioning Service and the word search/maze that are found on the next page can be photocopied front to back of a single 5½ x 8½ and inserted in your bulletin.*

Commissioning Service

- Leader** In a busy, fragmented world, the camp/retreat environment offers people a pause to experience the meaning of living the church of Christ in a holistic way.
- Cong.** We support this valuable and unique ministry.
- Leader** In our camping ministry God calls us to follow Jesus and to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.
- Cong.** We want our camps to be places where people seek and find God's face in creation, receive God's love in Christ, and radiate God's Spirit in the world.
- Leader** To this end, we offer a blessing on those who serve as camp staff in whatever capacity.
- Cong.** God, bless camp staff as they model Jesus' life and teachings in every dimension of daily life.
- Staff** As best we can, we will be Christ-like companions to all our guests, and we will care for God's earth as an extension of Jesus' ministry.
- Cong.** We will pray for you in your ministry of care-giving for all God's creation.
- Leader** We offer a blessing to all the children and youth who receive this ministry at camp.
- Cong.** God, bless the children and youth as they encounter God face to face in creation and in this unique communal setting.
- Campers** We come to camp to meet God and learn of Jesus' transforming teachings. We will respect our leaders and accept our fellow campers.
- Cong.** We pray that you will be transformed by God's love at camp.
- Leader** Finally, we offer a blessing to those who support the camping ministry through financial support, prayer support, service projects, and in other ways.
- Cong.** God, bless the volunteers who offer their gifts. We thank you for all whose support strengthens and nourishes the spiritual life of many people through our outdoor ministries.
- All** We promise to be God's radiant light-bearers. We will share God's love and pass it on in every dimension of our daily lives.

*Written by Eleanor Snyder for the Mennonite Camping Association Board, January 2000.
Permission is hereby granted to reprint for congregational or camp use.*

WORD SEARCH

r	f	m	r	f	f	b	u	r	n	i	n	g	s	m	w
c	a	i	q	u	o	u	t	e	b	n	m	p	t	o	i
r	z	d	r	b	r	s	x	c	r	c	a	v	s	u	l
e	t	b	i	e	e	h	n	e	h	r	n	m	a	n	d
a	e	q	w	a	s	e	t	i	k	c	r	t	f	t	e
t	a	w	e	c	t	a	y	v	y	u	r	i	k	a	r
i	c	o	o	h	w	i	i	i	f	p	a	a	a	i	n
o	h	r	s	g	n	i	n	i	g	e	b	e	n	e	
n	s	s	e	r	k	i	n	g	r	d	f	h	r	s	s
g	j	h	a	n	d	s	i	k	o	l	e	o	b	t	s
a	f	i	s	h	a	e	i	o	l	i	u	s	y	r	e
y	p	p	r	a	y	e	r	b	g	v	d	t	s	e	c
l	k	i	r	e	a	r	t	h	m	s	f	s	t	e	a
o	c	h	u	r	c	h	t	o	n	g	u	e	s	s	e
h	e	a	v	e	n	s	r	c	v	e	a	l	e	d	p
m	i	n	i	s	t	r	y	e	l	p	i	c	s	i	d

Find these words, they are from the scripture passages, hymns, prayers and stories in this morning's worship.

awe	church	forest	hosts	receiving	tongues
beach	creation	glorify	ministry	revealed	trees
beginning	disciples	hands	mountains	search	true
breakfast	earth	heavens	peace	seeking	water
burning	fire	heights	prayer	spark	wilderness
bush	fish	holy	radiating	teach	worship

Find your way to the campfire!

