

**On Camp and Conference Sunday** we have a special opportunity to join together with congregations across the Presbyterian Church (USA) to celebrate the creation of nature, to recognize the importance of retreating and to honor relationships that are fostered through outdoor ministry.

Encourage your home church to participate in **Camp and Conference Sunday**. This day is not only meant to raise an awareness of the camp and conference programs and possibilities within the denomination, but also to express gratitude and support for camps and conference centers of Presbyterian congregations, presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly and for all the dedicated and talented people who serve at them.



**Camps and retreats** have long been defining experiences designed to encourage persons to hear, respond, and develop as spiritual leaders called to inspire and lead others in lives of love. Camps and retreats have as part of their purpose the responsibility to assist persons in connecting the learning and transformation at camp or on a retreat with new ways of being and living in the world when they return. According to The Presbyterian Panel, the most common setting for a singular spiritual growth experience is a camp, followed by a retreat.



Our Biblical and Church roots affirm the values of occasional retreats for spiritual renewal and relationships. There were three annual worship/renewal pilgrimages expected of God's people; Passover in the Spring, The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) in the summer, and The Festival of Booths in the Fall. On the American frontier, week-long camp meetings became the primary annual spiritual pilgrimage. Gradually these were replaced by annual revival services and church camp programs. God has often chosen to use retreats, revivals, pilgrimages, and even the "wilderness" to inspire, call, instruct, and/or renew people for service.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), along with The Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association, invites your congregation to rejoice, remember, pray for, and visit one of your camps or conference centers. This special emphasis Sunday is set aside by the General Assembly so that congregations all across the denomination may recognize the ministry provided by camps and conferences. As Presbyterians, and people of the Reformed faith, we are called to participate in active ministry. Our camp and conference centers manifest that active ministry and nurture that calling.

# Camp and Conference Ministry

## Emphasis Sunday

### Worship Materials

## 2009

#### Prelude

#### Welcome

#### Call to Worship (from Psalm 27)

One: The Lord is our light and our salvation;

**Many: Whom shall we fear?**

One: The Lord is the stronghold of our lives;

**Many: Of whom shall we be afraid?**

One: The Lord will hide us in the cover of his tent.

**Many: We will sing and make melody at the campfires of the Lord.**

One: Teach us your way, O Lord.

**Many: And lead us on hikes through level ground.**

**All: We believe that we shall see the goodness of the Lord in God's Creation!**

One: Wait for the Lord!

**All: Be strong, take courage, wait for the Lord!**

#### Hymn

#### Call to Confession

#### Prayer of Confession

God you spin the whirling planets, the moon and stars are your celestial jewelry. You have given us the beautiful and bountiful earth as our inheritance. Yet we confess our stewardship has been lax. We have neglected, removed ourselves from, and mis-used creation and it's beauty. We fail in our care for neighbor and stranger. Our actions are toward consuming, not conserving. Forgive us, we pray.

We confess our lives are busy whirlwinds of email, text messages, programs, work, and distractions. Help us to see your handiwork and harmony on nature. Let the birds of the air and the lilies of the field guide us in lives of discipleship. May we, like Jesus, seek times apart, to reflect and pray. Lord make us instruments of your peace. Hear our confession and in your grace and mercy, forgive us. In the strong name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

#### Assurance of Pardon

**Gloria – Sing Halle Halle Hallelujah (New Song Participants Hymnbook, page 23)**

#### Prayer of Illumination

## First Scripture reading – Isaiah 9: 1-7 (NRSV)

1 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2 The people who walked in darkness – on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For all the boots of the trampling warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rest upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

### ***Reflections on the first reading:***

*Scholars think this passage was used for the coronation of a king, perhaps Hezekiah. In its continued usage in the faith, it has come to be seen as a foreshadowing of the Messiah. G.F. Handel's famous choral work by the same name has recitatives and choruses drawn from this text. Isaiah also uses several titles for the king which have come to be synonymous with Jesus.*

*Images used:*

*People living in darkness and emerging into the light*

*The nation multiplying*

*Burdens and yokes being lifted*

*The characteristics of the Davidic king – peace, justice, righteousness are all consistent and familiar themes of prophetic literature.*

*But perhaps the theme that resonates most for me in the midst of all these familiar images and thoughts is the final sentence. "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." Now zeal is not a word we use very often, but here it is perfect. Zeal, zealous eager, fired up love, cannot wait to go love, God's zeal, God's leaving the 99 sheep to look for one, obsession with loving and saving us is a powerful message for us today. God **will do** all these marvelous poetic and saving images. Light out of darkness – God's zealous love **will do** that. Bring a Prince of Peace – God's zealous love **will do**. Establish justice and righteousness forever – God's zealous love **will do**.*

## Second Scripture reading Matthew 4: 12-23 (NRSV)

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." 17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I shall make you fish for people." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

### **Reflections on the second reading:**

*Matthew uses more verses to tell the story of the call of the disciples than Mark. But this is helpful for lectionary folk since Matthew conveniently echoes the Isaiah text to get Jesus situated in Galilee. Matthew's gospel does this in order to help his Jewish Christian audience understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of Hebrew Scriptures.*

*It is important to note that this passage occurs immediately after Jesus is tempted in the desert. Calling disciples is the first act of Jesus' ministry in the synoptic gospels. Theologically this is important because although Jesus is the Messiah, he is not the king that many sought. Jesus will not run a "from the top down" organization. He recruits disciples to help him spread the message and builds a bottom up movement. As committee forming Presbyterians we might do well to take heed.*

*Jesus immediately forms community. He walks by the sea and calls to sets of brothers to come and join him. The text is silent about who these people are, other than their profession. We do not know if they had previously known or heard Jesus. Nor do we know if they had personal lives or relationships and what shape those were in. The text is silent as to whether they knew each other in the fishing community. We just know they were at work, fishing. We can speculate from the text that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were somewhat more prosperous. Their father had fished before them and they had a boat.*

*What we do know is that Jesus called them with an imperative and a promise. "Put down your nets and come follow me" Jesus says! No sales pitch of promise of salary plus benefits and a bonus. Just the imperative, "Follow me." Follow me and I will make you fish for people. People. Jesus needs people. People to "catch" or share with people. People are the essence of Jesus' ministry. Jesus, like the zealous God in Isaiah, wants and needs people to love and spread the good news.*

*In camp and conference ministry, we too are "fishing for people." People to come and enjoy the beauty of God's creation. To come and get away from the daily hum of life to a place where they can hear God's personal call to them. People to fill the woods or the seaside with laughter and squeals of the joy of a faith community. People to gather*

*around tables and campfires and tell again the stories of God's love and care for us. People to fish. People to go out and help others "catch" the good news and also follow Jesus' call.*

*Peter and Andrew, James and John heard the call and immediately left what they were doing to follow Jesus. The immediacy of their response to Jesus' call is puzzling to us. But can we open our own ears and eyes to be alert to the call of God in our lives? Camps and conference centers are places where lives are changed as they hear and respond to God's call to them. They can get away and discern God's purpose for them in their daily life. **The 2002 Presbytery Panel survey revealed that 70% of PC(USA) members can recall one particular spiritual growth experience that was significant in shaping their Christian life and their heeding God's call. The most common setting for such an experience was at a camp, conference or retreat!***

*Camps need Peter and Andrew, Sally, Tamika, Jose and the others in your congregation to go to camp – to get away and hear Jesus' call for them. Camps and conference centers also need your prayers and support. The church leaders of tomorrow are in our camps today!*

## **Sermon**

## **Affirmation of Faith**

## **Offering**

### Offering interpretation

Your congregation may want to consider dedication all or part of your offering to scholarships to send campers from your church or to provide funds for less fortunate campers from the community to attend camp. Many churches also directly support your local church camp and conference center. Please also remember the gift of people. Remind your congregation that adult volunteers, young adult staff, and others are needed to lead campers, to staff work camps, and to help in the variety of jobs that make camp happen. Maybe you have members of your congregation who would like to serve on the camp board? Or who could come to camp and share stories or their profession with campers? There are so many ways to join and strengthen the community at camp and connect it directly to your congregation.

## **Prayers of the people**

**LEADER:** Give thanks to the Lord who is good.

**PEOPLE: God's love is everlasting.**

**L:** Come, let us praise God joyfully!

**P: Let us come to God with thanksgiving.**

**L:** For this wonderful world in which we live; for the things great and small, beautiful and awesome; for seen and unseen splendors;

**P: Thank you, God!**

**L:** For the freedom to worship you in spirit and in truth in our churches, in our homes, and in the sanctuary of the outdoors;

**P: Thank you, God!**

**L:** For the ministry of camp and conference centers across the Presbyterian Church (USA) denomination;

**P: Thank you, God!**

**L:** For the ministry of our local camp and conference centers;

**P: Thank you, God!**

**L:** For the service of all servants working in these ministries; employees and volunteers, directors, counselors, cooks, maintenance workers,

**P: Thank you, God!**

**L:** For the opportunity to serve as partners in stewardship of the land;

**P: Thank you, God!**

**L:** Above all, O God, for your Son, Jesus Christ, who, by example, as taught us to set ourselves apart from the world to pray and meditate.

**P: We thank and praise you, eternal God for all your goodness to us.**

**Amen**

-Adapted from "A Litany of Thanksgiving," Book of Common Worship

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn**

**Charge and Benediction**

**Postlude**

**Music notes/Suggested Songs**

Camp songs as appropriate (your local camp director can help with selections)

From the Presbyterian Hymnal

#306 Fairest Lord Jesus

#473 For the Beautiful Earth

#358 Help Us Accept each Other

#324 Open my Eyes

#377 Lord You Have Come to the Lakeshore