

# **“Listen, God is Calling”**

**Project Connect  
Camp Packet for Discernment Advocates  
Summer of 2007**

## **Our Goal:**

To provide some guidelines, resources, ideas for Discernment Advocates as they speak to Lutheran Summer Camp Staffs about their sense of vocational discernment for the summer ahead and beyond.

We will be addressing such questions as: **“Why am I here?”**

**“What is the calling/vocation of summer camp staff?”**

**“Is God calling me?” “What is my vocation? Today and tomorrow?”**

We will encourage staff to ask themselves several questions:

- **When did I see God today?**
- **When did God use me today?**
- **What did God say to me today?**

Through these and similar questions we hope to encourage staff to “listen to God by listening to that inner voice,” to reflect on their experiences through the eyes of faithful discernment. We hope that staff will think about how God is using them this summer, AND how God may be calling them into future ministry in His church.

Camp is a fast paced, often stressful place for staff as they seek to lead and meet the needs of their campers. We want to encourage the staff even in the midst of this busy environment to reflect and to listen. In the words of the hymn found in With One Voice —Listen, God is Calling #712.

“Listen, listen, God is calling through the Word inviting, offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

1. Jesus gave his mandate: share the good news that he came to save us and set us free.
2. Let none be forgotten throughout the world. In the triune name of God go and baptize.
3. Help us to be faithful, standing steadfast, walking in your precepts, led by your Word.”

We will outline five talks/meditations/discussions that can be used during staff training week. Discernment Advocates may change the order of the topics, or add and subtract topics –

- I. **God is calling us to be WELCOMERS (Hospitality)**
- II. **God is calling us to be Models of Faith**
- III. **God is calling us to be Servants**
- IV. **God is calling us to be Teachers and Proclaimers**
- V. **Your Calling and Vocation to follow Him**

I. **“God Calls Us To Be WELCOMERS”**

The church, as a whole and Outdoors Ministry/Church Camps in particular is called to the ministry of welcoming and hospitality. One of our basic needs as humans is to “belong.” We want to, we need to, belong; to feel welcomed, at home.

Almost all congregations and camps think of themselves as being “welcoming,” “friendly,” “hospitable”—but often to a newcomer, an outsider, a misfit, they are not. One of the most important missions you will have this summer is to welcome others, to help them feel “at home” during their camp stay.

What specifically does your camp do to “welcome” new campers, new staff and to help them feel at home.

**Dialogue or Discuss**  
And /or  
**SHARE A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**  
**When you felt alone...left out...**  
**Share how you were welcomed or not welcomed.**

**Biblical Examples:** (feel free to add your own)

In baptism we are welcomed into God’s family—we are welcomed by God and we are welcomed by the congregation...God welcomes us into his family, the one, holy, catholic church...God’s people welcome us into the congregation, the local, concrete expression of the “one, holy, catholic church.”

**Read from the service of baptism LBW pg 124-125**

Our welcome is not based on our pedigree (family etc), nor is it based on our achievements or status, it is based solely on GRACE...God’s unmerited love and favor... Use the Parable of the Prodigal Son and Older Brother to further unpack this idea of welcome. (Luke 15:11-32)

You are called this summer to be a welcomer, called to the ministry of hospitality. How do you help the “outsider” feel welcome and accepted? Learning your camper’s name (the names of other staff) is a start. Learning about, taking interest in each camper’s joys and fears and interests also is an important step. God said, “I have called you by name, and you are mine.” (Isa 43:1) Each of us is known by God, we are important to God. We are welcomed by God.

**Take a few minutes for returning staff to pair up with new staff. Allow them to get to know one another better and then ask them to sit together and be discussion partners for the rest of your sessions that week.**

The welcome doesn't end on opening day. Think about all the different opportunities you have to welcome others during the week. Camp has many different settings...what do you do to welcome campers to your table in the dining hall...how about at the camp store...the camp office...the waterfront...the arts and crafts shop etc...

What is the difference between a “friendly environment” and a “welcoming environment?”

How is God calling you to be a “welcomer?” Some have the gifts of hospitality...it almost comes naturally, but some do not. Yet everyone here is being called by God to be a “welcomer.” We won't all do it in the same way. Yet we are all being called. What do you do when God calls you to do something you are not very good at—or calls you to do something that makes you uncomfortable?

<b>Discuss</b>
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We have a promise from God that we need to remember and hold onto throughout this summer and throughout the rest of life...Jesus promised “Lo, I am with you always!” He is with us! And he will empower us to be “welcomers.”

## **II. God Calls Us To Model Faith (doubts and all)**

Try now to think about three people who have been mentors to you...who have in one way or another modeled what it is to be a Christian. What do they have in common? How did they get through to you?

**You may want staff to share and discuss**

Much of what we learn and what we do is by imitation.

### **Use personal examples from your life**

- In Little League, I imitated my batting stance Mickey Mantle
- In Jr. High, I imitated some Sr. High guys' way that they dressed and cut their hair.
- Preaching style, teaching style.

Your campers are looking for “models of faith”...their Pastor and Sunday school teachers are too old...they can identify with you. They will be watching your every step and action. They will note how you pray...how you live out your faith...how you worship in chapel... (And probably even how you brush your teeth!) Whether you like it or not, most of your campers will put you up on a pedestal. (That doesn't mean that they will always listen to or obey you.) What you do and say is very important. Whether you feel up to it or not...God is calling you to be a role model...to model faith (weak or strong) in Jesus Christ!

This is certainly not a new concept. Jesus used two phrases in the Gospels more than any others...“fear not” and “follow me.” “Follow me”, Jesus' call to each of us to be like him...to do as he did. “Follow me” and care for the poor...“follow me” and heal the sick...“follow me” and love your neighbor...“follow me” and forgive one another...“follow me” and come and die.

Jesus once said: “If any want to be my disciples, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.” Jesus calls his followers to live (and die) as he did. This is a most difficult calling. Martin Luther said that we are to be “little Christ's.” There is no more challenging calling in all the world. None of us is worthy, none of us will successfully fulfill this calling, yet it is given to us. The bar has been set extremely high.

**Discuss Bible passage – what it means to you.  
Mt 4:18-22 or Mt 16:24**

This summer and for the rest of your life you have been given this calling to live as Christ lived...you are to be a model. What is it that you will be “modeling” to your campers and to other staff? Does your camper get the message: “Be cool like me”...or “be humble”...do they see you as always trying to “be first” or willing to stand at the back of the line...What kind of a faith...what kind of values...what kind of lifestyle are you modeling?

**Discuss with “partner” “What kind of a “model of faith” are you?”**

Whether you want it nor not, you are for your campers in the “spot-light.” They will be watching you as you do or don’t clean bathrooms, as you pick up scraps of paper walking to your cabin, as you interact with other staff, as you sing and pray in chapel, as you criticize and discipline, as you thank and praise.

This is a huge responsibility, a very difficult calling. You know (and God knows) you are far from perfect, indeed you are a sinner. Yet God has called you to be on staff and to be a model.

Once again we are reminded of our need and of our Lord’s promise to us. “Lo I am with you always!” He will be with you as you seek to model the faith...He will be with you where you fail...But the calling is clear, “Come and follow me!”

### III. “Called To Be Servants Of God (and one another)”

**You may want to briefly review, clarify, correct what you talked about in topics I and II.**

We mentioned earlier that a universal need felt by almost all is our need to belong... another need most of us have is “the need to make a difference.” One of the reasons that many of you have come to camp this summer is that you want “to make a difference.” As camp staff you can make a difference... You have been called this summer (and maybe for the rest of your life) to be a “leader”...but in God’s way of things when He calls you to be a leader...He does it by helping you to be a servant...

**Share personal examples of how you have “led” by being a servant---or how being a leader has made you into a servant**

And/or

**Discuss how leadership and service go hand in hand  
Who are the “leaders” that have best modeled servanthood?  
Share examples**

Jesus called to them and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mt 20:25-28

In the camp setting, the campers are the guests and the staff are their servants – my guess is that for some staff, the idea of campers as guests and staff as servants isn’t what you want to hear...after all as nice as camp is, it is not some kind of luxury resort. But that is one of the strange things about being part of the baptized, being part of the body of Christ, it means that we are servants...servants of God...servants to one another, and servants to all the world. Listen how one camp counselor reflected on her ministry of service:

“I shuffle to the front of the chapel and kneel in front of a chair and a basin of water as my first camper, Clara, sits down and slips her flip flops off. The candlelight flickers as I go through the motions of this weekly ritual: lift her foot and set it gently in the warm water, wash it, and then pat it dry with a soft towel. I stand up to hug Clara, and as my eyes meet hers, my tiredness falls away as I look back on the small ways I have served this week. I haven’t cured cancer, but I have cured homesickness for a scared and crying ten year-old girl. I haven’t saved a city from destruction, but I have put up a tent that sheltered my girls, my children for one week, from a seemingly endless rainstorm. I haven’t changed the world, but I have changed the existence of a group of campers for a week.

In the past, “living a life of service” has always made me think of overseas mission work or ordained ministry. These are all amazing acts of service, but my time as a summer camp counselor revealed to me the quiet, less obvious acts of service that can be

performed in day-to-day existence. Answering “God Questions” in Bible study, asking another counselor how their day was and really caring about their response, pulling weeds in the camp garden, and listening to campers tell story after story about their pets and adventures: this was my service. It will continue for the rest of my life, no matter where I go or what I find as my career or calling, in all of the small, everyday ways that I can share God’s love with the world.”

We are servants...whether camp directors or maintenance worker...unit leader, kitchen staff, counselor—we are being called by God to this ministry of service...

After all we follow one who came as a servant into this world 2000 years ago...

Jesus emptied himself of his divine powers and rights and took on the form of a servant... Listen how the Apostle Paul writes about this:

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” Phil. 2:5-8.

Indeed Jesus said of himself: “I came not to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom...”

Jesus calls his followers to a life of service...

1. John 13:12-15 Washing of feet.
2. Matt 25:34-40 What you have done to the least of these my brothers/sisters you have done to me.

Our life becomes enriched as we serve others...as we serve we begin to realize that we are making a difference and that difference is significant!

**Have staff discuss...**  
**Share a time you served others on a mission trip or soup kitchen, a camp experience, serving a neighbor—SHARE HOW IT MADE YOU FEEL**

Too many in our world set as their goal in life the ideal of being served, waited on by others—that’s not the Christian Life.

As you serve this summer take time to reflect on how it makes you feel...Think about how God may be calling you to serve others in your future choice of vocation...Pastor... Teacher...Social Worker...Medical Worker...As God’s people you are called to be a servant...Jesus will be there beside you because He is the greatest Servant of all.

#### **IV. “The Ministry Of Teaching and Proclaiming”**

Someone once said “Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where to find food...” We are all “beggars” before God. We “beg” for faith...for mercy...for love; we open our hands and hearts and ask to be filled. This summer as camp staff you will be called to teach...to teach the Biblical Story, to teach others how to swim, or how to shoot an arrow at a target, or how to pray, how to do lots of stuff. You are being called into the ministry of teaching, some of you have the gift of teaching, you are good at it; some of you do not have that gift, and it will be difficult; yet you will still need to do it.

The opportunities and the various contexts for teaching will be many. Teaching the curriculum, leading devotions, teaching “how to do—are the obvious teaching situations. But there will be many “less obvious” opportunities to teach. Most of all you will be teaching as you share yourself, your joys, your struggles, and your approach to life.

**Discussion**

**Remember a favorite teacher...What did they teach you?  
Why was he/she a good teacher? What is a strength in your way of teaching?**

Each of you will have your own style of teaching. Try to learn new styles by observing how others on staff teach.

Jesus reminded us the importance of teaching the faith when he said in Matthew (28:18-20)...”teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

In addition to being “teachers,” you are also being called to be “proclaimers” of God’s word. Usually we think of Pastors as being “proclaimers”, and Pastors do indeed proclaim...proclaim Gods Love...His forgiveness...His joy and grace. But all of God’s people are called to “proclaim”.

**Discuss**

**Think of a Pastor or another Christian who is a “proclaimer”. Describe how they “proclaim”, why are they effective or not? What did they proclaim to you?**

How is your attitude toward worship...prayer...devotions a form of proclamation? Maybe you are uncomfortable sharing your faith journey, how could that hinder your ability to “proclaim?”

As a “teacher and proclaimer” you don’t need to know all the answers, but you do need to be open to the process...that is you need to try.

Jesus invites us to “let our lights shine” (Mt 5:14-16). Your light may be bright or flickering, but you are called to let it shine. It’s not about you; it’s about God’s light shining through you. You might be surprised at the results as you try to teach and proclaim” this summer. God may bring great results if you just give it a try.

**V. Gods Call And Your Vocation**

Being called by God can often be a rather scary experience. Our calling begins in our baptism... Maybe it is good that as babies we don't really know what is happening when we are baptized. If we knew, maybe we would "chicken out."

In our baptism God claims us as his own; he adopts us into his family, the church. He binds himself to us, promises to love us always. In baptism God also gives us a mission, a vocation. He calls us to love Him, and to love and serve our neighbor. Now while most of us didn't realize this in our baptisms, when we were confirmed, we affirmed what took place in baptism and we promised; (LBW pg 201)

- To live among God's faithful people (be a member of the church).
- To hear his Word and share in his supper (be active).
- To proclaim the good news of God in Christ by our words and actions.
- Serve all people following the example of Jesus and to strive for peace and justice in all the earth.

That's a big promise!

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discuss</b> <b>Have group discuss what this promise means to them</b></p>
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What role has God had in your coming to camp this summer? Did God open doors or close doors in the process of your decision to spend the summer at camp? Do you think that God has "called" you to be on staff? If so why?

The idea of "call" or "vocation" is very important in the Bible. God calls Abraham and Sara (Genesis 12). God calls Moses (Exodus 3); Jesus called the disciples (Luke 5:1-11, 27-28, 9:1-6, John 1:35-51)

A most interesting calling is that of the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 3.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Read and Discuss 1 Samuel Chapter 3</b> <b>Have you ever "heard" God calling your name?</b> <b>Could God be calling you this summer to do things beyond the summer?</b> <b>How can you be open to God's call?</b></p>
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Calls come in many forms. In the Bible, God's call comes in dreams, through the words of invitation from others, through nature, through events.

In the past you were called by God through your Baptism.

Today you are being called by God to serve on the summer camp staff.

Tomorrow God may call you to a course of study, to a particular school, to a future job or vocation.

A “call from God” is needless to say a very powerful experience. Many try to ignore that call, because they want to be in charge of their own lives, and determine their own destiny. To hear Gods call (to try to discern Gods call) for many is a life long process. This summer may (if you really listen) give you some hints as to what or where God is calling you.

Know this however... you are called to follow Jesus...to be on camp staff...to be a welcomer...a model...a servant...a teacher and proclaimer. God promises to walk with you, to empower you to fulfill your vocation or calling.

Others have heard God’s call while at camp and through their experience as camp staff

<p><b>Give examples; ask the director about previous staff who have chosen vocations based on their experience at camp...teachers, pastors, social workers etc.</b></p>
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Your presence here this summer is not a coincidence—you have been called! You have been called to make a difference in the lives of your campers and in the lives of others this summer. And through your experience here this summer. God may be calling you into a life long vocation of serving Him.

Think about it  
Pray about it  
Listen for God calling out to you!