

Relationship in Christ
Connections Outdoor Ministry
Theological Resource
(Winter 2005)

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Relationship In Christ

(Connections Outdoor Ministry Theological Resource)

Introduction

Thank you for your ministry as a Lutheran camp director! The Outdoor Ministry program in the ELCA is one of the strongest pieces of the puzzle when it comes to calling Christians to ordained and lay service in the Church. The witness to Christ you provide for children and youth is immeasurable. So thank you, and God's blessings in your ministry!

This resource was inspired by a strong calling for just such a thing by many of the Camp Directors and ministers who were consulted in the preparation of the Connections Grant for the Eastern Cluster of ELCA Seminaries (Philadelphia, Southern, and Gettysburg). This grant will fund programs which aim to help Lutherans discern their calling into ministry and point them towards the resources available to them. Hopefully this resource will inform your ministry and the ministry of your counselors over the summer,

and at the very least give a language with which to talk about the faith that our summers together are build upon.

Focus

The primary way of talking about theology in this resource is through **relationship**. Just as the relationships our counselors establish with our campers are central to our ministry this summer, the relationships established through the Trinity, the Bible, the Sacraments, in the Church, and on into the promise of Salvation are central to how we understand faith. No matter the theological focus from section to section we will consistently return to the idea of **relationship** to illuminate the theological significance of what our counselors are about this summer.

Underling this focus on relationship is the Connections focus on Christian Vocation. As those who follow in the footsteps of Martin Luther we are always quick to point to the importance of calling and vocation in our life of faith in Christ Jesus. Luther writes ,

“See, since now no one is without some kind of work, if he or she desires to do right. All, therefore, are to take heed to remain in their calling, look to themselves, do faithfully what they are commanded and serve God, keeping God’s laws.”¹

¹ WA 10.1.1:308-309

One of the great joys of this summer will be to see the counselors and campers begin to discover their gifts and see how they can serve the Church, the World, and God.

The Need

Theology can be quite an intimidating word for most folks. Hopefully through this resource we can break down some of those walls both for ourselves and our counselors. As Lutherans we are quite apt to talk about “the Priesthood of all believers”.² This summer your counselors will take on the role of Priest in their cabins, as they lead worship, offer care and mediation, and most importantly witness to the Grace of Jesus. While you might not want to let counselors get too carried away with the idea of being Priests (wearing funny hats around camp might make keeping up with the campers tough) it is important to empower them as **theologians** in their cabins this summer. When questions turn to God and our calling as Christian they will be the one looked to for answers. Hopefully spending sometime in orientation on theological formation will ease the butterflies over these moments, and will empower counselors to be the “God Talkers” (a less threatening way of saying Theologian) in the midst of their campers this summer. Hopefully

² “We are all consecrated priests through our baptism.” (LW 44:127)

through their example and witness campers will leave their time at your camp empowered to be “God Talkers” too!

A second reason for this resource is that not all of our counselors are coming from a strictly Lutheran background. One summer I worked at a Lutheran camp in the south the staff was nearly 20% non-Lutheran. As we continue to point towards our belief in “one holy and apostolic Church”, we camp directors must also recognize that the witness of our ministry is of the Christian faith professed by the Lutheran Church. One way of thinking of it is that this summer we call our counselors to speak of the faith in a “Lutheran Dialect”. While many of us feel comfortable in the Lutheran Church and believe its teachings to be the most faithful presentation of the Gospel, we must acknowledge that there are those in our midst that come from other traditions. Instead of seeing these traditions as competing truth claims, we can address them as different ways of speaking which we pray one day Christ will bring into harmony with one another so that we may more faithfully witness to the Gospel. Encourage discussion and sharing amongst your diverse staff, but in your orientation also make sure you lay out the presentation of the Gospel that we as Lutherans and a Lutheran camp are called to deliver.

How to use this resource

This resource is just that; a resource. It is to be used and not used as you see fit for your camps situation and needs. It has been divided up into 5 pieces which can either be presented in one teaching session during your orientation (estimated at around 1 hour and 15 minutes) or in five separate sessions (estimated at 15 minutes a piece) to be spread out amongst your staff orientation. If you choose to lead each piece separately please note that the sessions build upon one another, so they should be done in order.

Each piece is made up of three sections. The first is **What Do We Say?** which presents a theological understanding of the subject faithful to Lutheranism. This is where you would find the most theological meat for your session. Second is **How Do We Say It?** which outlines how such theological understandings are made a reality in our lives and are practically applied in our camping ministries this summer. This is where you would turn to for ideas of how to illustrate such theological concepts for your counselors. Lastly is **Where Are We Called?** where we look at how our Lutheran theology calls us as servants and leaders in the Church. You can use this in your teaching session, or refer back to these insights as the summer goes on and you encourage staff and campers to explore and use their God given gifts.

Each part begins with a list of **talking points** which allow for you to catch the highlights of each section, make notes, and lead your

teaching session without reading directly from the resource. The talking points are then highlighted in the text of the resource when they come up. At the end of each section is a prayer written to use at either the opening or closing of each part. This is there to give a liturgical emphasis to the teaching, and witness to the fact that all that we do as Christians is worship. Finally there are suggestions of how to apply this theology in your counselors' ministry. The question, "Yeah, but how do we do that" will certainly arise, and these are some suggestions of how to answer that. This is also a portion where you can brainstorm and add suggestions that are particular to your camp's program.

Most importantly, have fun with this! Read it over well before you use it in front of counselors, pick and choose from the information, and present it in a way that will be most comfortable for yourself and most formational for your counseling staff. Inspiring a love for "God Talk" (theology) can both inspire the ministry of your staff this summer, and can help the spark of the Holy Spirit already deep within your counselors as they begin to explore and learn of God's calling for them in their lives.

Thanks

For all their faithful work on the Connections Grant and offering me the opportunity to put this resource together I would like

to thank Rev. Rick Summy and Rev. Louise Johnson from Philadelphia Seminary, Rev. James Cobb from Gettysburg Seminary, and especially Shelly Allen and Rev. Tom Henderson at Southern Seminary. Thank you to Dr. Susan McArver for her guidance and direction through the process. Thanks to Mike Henning from Camp Agape, Rev. Mary Canniff-Kuhn from Camp Lutheridge, and Chad Hershberger from Camp Mt. Luther for their suggestions, readings and resources. Thanks to the students, faculty, and staff of Southern Seminary for their formation and guidance. And finally thanks to my wife, Naomi Sease Carriker, for her faithfulness, patience and good humor. God's blessings!

Part 1

The Living God: The nature of the Triune God

Talking Points

What do we say?

- One of the most important things we profess about God is that God is relational.

- As Lutherans we point towards GRACE as a defining characteristic of God.
- One way this relational nature of God is expressed is in the Trinity.

How do we say it?

- One way to talk to campers about the Triune God, and show how God moves through our lives, is an image of a person with a crown on their head, a towel around their waist, and sneakers on their feet.
- An important distinction to make when talking to campers about God is between a *Theology of Glory* and a *Theology of the Cross*.

Where are we called?

- The most important direction all this calls us for this summer is to be servants.
- How will my calling place me in relationship with other children of God?
- How is God calling us to be a servant to others?

What do we say?

Our greatest hope this summer is that the campers in your care leave with a strengthened relationship with Jesus and a greater knowledge of the God of Grace and Mercy that loves them all. This is passed on in so many

forms, from the games you play to the care you give. Inevitably, and hopefully, though questions as direct as “Who is God?” or “Why did God do it that way?” are going to crop up.

One of the most important things we profess about God is that God is relational.³ Just as we hope to influence and witness to campers this summer through the relationships we create with them, God works through relationship. This is clear even in the early books of the Old Testament where, “the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as one speaks to a friend,” (Exodus 33:11). Often God is seen as a cold calculating dictator from on high who has handed down impersonal decrees like the Ten Commandments, or sent his only Son to die on a cross without realizing what a horrific fate it would be. On the contrary we witness to a God who knows what his children need, want, and desire, and most importantly where they have fallen short. It is there that God’s central characteristic, **GRACE** comes to the forefront.⁴

Often we like to speak of a God of Justice or a God of Mercy; a God that dishes out what is deserved (justice) or a God that turns a blind eye to our sin and loves us anyway (mercy). **Instead as Lutherans we point towards GRACE as a defining characteristic of God.** It is **GRACE** that makes God’s justice seem like mercy to us, and it is **GRACE** that makes God’s mercy seem like justice to us. God judges out of love, and loves out of judgment. We find description of this Grace-filled nature of God in the second chapter of Ephesians, where Paul describes God as, “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4).

³ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yes wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. (Matthew 11:19)

⁴ Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful. (Psalm 116: 5)

This relational nature of God is expressed in our understanding of the Trinity.⁵ As professed in the Creeds in worship we say that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; each one of these equally God and each one equally distinct person. In theological speak we say we believe in the **Triune God**. Now we could try and get into the how's and the why's of this, but most importantly for us this summer lets look at what this means about God. Not only does God relate to us in an endless number of ways, but the very essence of God **is** relationship! God is in relationship with God's own self, and as children of God, by being wrapped up in Jesus, and moved by the Holy Spirit we get wrapped up in that relationship too.

How do we say it?

There are many images we can use in talking to our campers about God. While it's important not to completely destroy images of God that campers come to us with, hopefully with our ministry this summer we can dispel many of the popular images of God as an old man with a long white beard who looks down from on high and send them home with the knowledge of a God alive and working in our midst. **One way to talk to campers about the Triune God, and show how God moves through our lives, is an image of a person with a crown on their head, a towel around their waist, and sneakers on their feet.** The crown is from God the Father, who through no action of our own, but the grace of faith, frees us from sin and crowns us children of God. The towel wrapped around the waist is from Jesus Christ the Son, who shows us how those who are Lord of all must be

⁵ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all I have said to you (John 14: 26)

servants of all. And the sneakers on the feet are from the Holy Spirit, who imparts in us the gifts to follow in the way of discipleship.

An important distinction to make when talking to campers about God is between a *Theology of Glory* and a *Theology of the Cross*.⁶ How often have you heard someone preaching about how much being a Christian will make them more popular, a better student, or even richer? So often we try to make it seem as if Christians are the winning team, and who doesn't want to be part of a winning team? The funny thing about this is that it seems throughout the Bible God is always siding with the poor, the hungry, and the outcast (who society would call "losers") all the way up to the Cross.⁷ A theology which sees the Cross as the central expression of God's love for humanity is one that understands God's care for those who have no hope but the **GRACE** of Jesus (which might in fact be all of us). It's a faith that calls us to follow in the way of the cross, a life of service, humility, and love. In a world consumed with money, competition, and coming out on top, what more radical way of living can we hope to inspire in campers than one which follows the Cross and serves amongst, worships with, and lifts up the lowliest amongst us?

Where Are We Called?

The most important direction all this calls us for this summer is to be servants. We are called to be patient and grace-filled servants to our

⁶ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

"In short, we can stand the loss of our possessions, our name, our life, and everything else; but we will not let ourselves be deprived of the Gospel, our faith, and Jesus Christ. And that is that." (LW 26:99)

⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

campers even when they are pushing everyone of our buttons and on our very last nerve, just as God as remained a servant even up to the Cross. We are called to be humble servants even when our campers begin to idolize us and want to place us up on a pedestal, just as Christ refused to become the glorious king and ruler that his disciples so often wanted from him. And we are called to be faithful servants even when ignoring a camper's need might be the easiest way to get through the day, just as God has consistently fulfilled his promises with the justice and mercy of **GRACE**.

As we look with our campers towards God's calling in our lives we can take two major signposts from our knowledge of God. First, **how will my calling place me in relationship with other children of God?** As we are called to be in relationship with God, we are called to be in relationship with God's children! So much of our technology seems to point us towards working in solitude and seclusion, in a world of nothing but nameless cubicles. While solitude and seclusion may be comfortable, and often important for spirituality, it is not what God calls us towards. Hopefully this summer of intentional Christian community can give all who enjoy it a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, as we have talked about at length already, Jesus Christ is a servant Lord. **How is God calling us to be a servant to others?**⁸ Does being a Christian servant mean just being a pastor or youth director, or are there faithful ways of being a servant in the Kingdom as an architect, teacher, lawyer, computer programmer, ect. As you explore these questions this summer with your campers and amongst yourselves I think you will

⁸ "God gives us grace not so that we can walk all over it as the world does, but because God takes an interest in all we do to our neighbors, good and bad, as though we were doing it to God." (BA 5:463)

begin to be surprised by the incredible depths of the answers you stumble upon.

PRAYER

Merciful and gracious God thank you for your presence and relationship amongst us in the form of your Son and your Spirit. Too often we are quick to cast you in our own image when it is you that made us in yours; please keep us mindful this summer of your grace and mercy so that we may direct campers towards the divine life in you. **AMEN**

Camp Applications

- Our relationships with campers witnesses to the graceful nature of the Triune God
- Using the three persons of the Trinity in our devotionals, skits, ect. will make campers more comfortable with the language
- Through service projects we can witness to the servant nature of Jesus, and remind campers that God calls us to minister to the lowly.

Part 2

The Living Word: Holy Scriptures

Talking Points

What do we say?

- The Holy Scriptures are not just words on a page to take or leave as Christians; they are recognized as the Word of God which addresses us directly in our lives.
- This relationship between Jesus and scripture is central.
- Scripture also gives Christians the language to talk about and the story to live in God.
- Through Baptism the stories of Scripture become our stories.

How do we say it?

- Truth is found in the living, creative, and powerful “address” from our Living God.
- One of the most important analogies is that of family stories.
- While some of Scripture may still be myth, the **TRUTH** passed on by these stories is what inspires faith in us.
- It is only through Christ that we read scripture with any sort of faith.

Where are we called?

- To return to Scripture
- To wrestle with Scripture
- To live in Scripture

What do we say?

This summer you're often going to find yourself at a loss for words quite a bit. It might be because a camper has just done something you have told them a thousand times it is not okay to do, or it may be because they've asked a question that you're just not sure how to answer. No matter the situation it might be a good idea to return to the primary resource God has provided us for the Christian life; the Holy Scriptures.

Often we talk about the Bible as the Living Word. We've already pointed towards the importance of relationship in our understanding of God, and that is just as important when we talk about the Bible. **The Holy Scriptures are not just words on a page to take or leave as Christians; they are recognized as the Living Word of God which addresses us directly in our lives.**⁹ It read us as we read it. Think of the times when you have just randomly opened the Bible to casually read and have ended up being confronted with verses which speak directly to what ever is going on around you. Also we talk about how the presence of Christ comes to us in the reading of the Gospels. As the story of Jesus is read aloud to each

⁹ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

other those stories are lived out in our lives and Jesus, our living Lord, stands in our midst.

This relationship between Jesus and scripture is central. In scripture we often see Jesus referred to as “the Word”. The Jesus that we witness to and profess our faith in is the one found in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are a primary and central way that Jesus speaks to his disciples. This summer as you walk with your campers in their relationship with Christ please don’t forget how central scripture is in that!

Scripture also gives Christians the language to talk about and the story to live in God.¹⁰ Think about the majors you all are in in college; all of them from the most abstract to the most technical have their own internal language that you have had to become familiar with. None of these languages are exclusive, anyone could join in and learn them, but they do help us all talk about something very specific. Through the Scriptures we learn the language to talk about God’s incredible relationship with us, something which human understanding couldn’t even begin to give words to.

The stories found in scripture are very important too, because through the waters of Baptism they become our stories too. The same way culture looks to the stories on the silver screen to point us towards how to “be cool” or “hot”, as Christians we turn to the

¹⁰ You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul... (Deuteronomy 11:18)

stories found in Scripture to lead us towards faith, hope, and love. And as Christ is the Word of God, as we encounter the Living Lord in the reading of these stories, it is Christ and Christ alone that gives us the strength and gifts to live as Christians.

How do we say it?

It's a sad fact that the Bible, a gift from God to help unite us, is so often used to divide. The state of things is that we have one side which sees the Bible as dictated by God into the hands of the authors and then filtered through human reason into truth claims, and another which understands the Bible as historical documents written by humans about their experiences with God which have to be understood through human reason. In contrast to this Lutheran thinking is that **truth is found in the living, creative, and powerful "address" from our Living God.** These are not just cold hard facts or historical documents to be poked and prodded, but an actual living current calling from God to God's Children. Central to our ministry this summer is living into that calling, those words and stories of the scripture, and showing campers how their lives can be wrapped up in the stories and life of Jesus.

To do this **one of the most important analogies is that of family stories.**¹¹ Most of us come with stories about our families that

¹¹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 11:19)

are so important they define who we are and are central to the relationships in our family. For my family reunions wouldn't be reunions without the story of the bull chasing my great-aunt Mary Ann into the house. Helping campers to see the stories of the Bible and of Jesus' life as our family stories as Children of God, by reading them, acting them out, and seeing how they impact and speak to our lives, helps to strengthen our relationship with the Word!

In the same way that some of our own family stories have been changed and adapted over time, it is okay to recognize that some of our stories from scripture might not be have the truth of an eyewitness account. But, there is a large difference between a myth and a lie; **while some of Scripture may still be myth, the TRUTH passed on by these stories is what inspires faith in us.**

When we read scripture with campers this summer we should always remember that **it is only through Christ that we read scripture with any sort of faith.** A practical way of saying that is to remember that Christ sits beside us to help us read, Christ is the words that we read, and Christ is the faith that dwells up within us as we read. Martin Luther talks about Christ as the "cannon within the cannon" which means that all that Scripture says to us is delivered through the life of Christ. Another way is to see Scripture as the manger which Christ rests in, and this summer you and your campers can be the shepherds and sheep that come to find the King!

Where are we called?

We started out talking about the calling that we as Christians receive from Scripture. This is not just a calling to read Scripture, but is God's constant calling for the rest of our lives. First, **return to scripture continually**. This isn't a one time read, but a book that addresses us differently each time we read it. Second, **we should be continually wrestling with the scriptures**. Like we said they are not just cold hard fact on a page, but they are a life to be lived out! Talk about them with you campers, your friends, and with God. Sometimes the truth of scripture does not come to you for a long time. And lastly, **live with the scriptures**. Like we have said let the stories become your own so that you have witness of the faith like Jonah and Stephen and Paul to look to when life gets hard or confusing. Most importantly let the story of Christ, from birth to cross to Easter morning, form your calling in life, whether it's doctor, teacher, pastor, or engineer. The life of Christ is a story that has no end!¹²

PRAYER

¹²“It is absolutely certain that one cannot enter into the [meaning of] Scripture by study or innate intelligence. Therefore your first task is to begin with prayer.” (LW 48:53-54)

“If you are a manual laborer, you find that the Bible has been put into your workshop, into your hand, into your heart. It teaches and preaches how you should treat your neighbor.” (LW 21:237)

Jesus, Word of God, thank you for living amongst us in the Scriptures. We confess that we too often turn to our own words to talk about you, and we pray that your Spirit will continually pull us back to your holy word so that this summer we may be faithful witnesses to our campers. **AMEN**

Camp Applications

- Being intentional about using scripture in all we do, from devotionals to skits to games.
- Begin and end your cabin's/small group's day with reading from scripture.

Part 3

The Holy Sacraments: The Water, Bread & Wine

Talking Points

What do we say?

- The life of the Lutheran Church is centered around the sacraments.
- The waters of Baptism are where the Christian life flows forth from.
- In the bread and wine of communion we encounter the physical presence of Christ's body and blood.
- With the bread and the wine we receive Christ's body and are brought back into "communion" with Christ and the Church.

How do we say it?

- The sacraments are real physical signs God has given us of His promises.
- Images of family can be really helpful in talking to campers about the sacraments.
- God's action, not ours.
- One does not have to "understand" or "accept", only receive (which alone is faith).

Where are we called?

- The waters of baptism is where our callings as Christians are rooted.
- Communion always keeps before us the sacrifice and service that a life of following Christ calls us to, and places us in the midst of those people we are called to serve.

What do we say?

The life of the Lutheran Church is centered around the sacraments. For us the Holy Sacraments are Baptism and Communion. These are specific practices where the worshipping community gathers around the promised presence of God. In the sacrament of Baptism the Holy Spirit comes down upon the Baptized person and washes away sin, claims the person as a Child of God, and gives the person the Gifts of the Spirit. In the sacrament of Communion Jesus Christ comes to us in the bread and the wine,

bring us back into right relationship with God and with the Body of Christ. None of these are done on our own. Both of these sacraments bring with them relationship with God and relationship with our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

The waters of Baptism are where the Christian life flows forth from.¹³ For Lutherans Baptism isn't just something we do to assure our way into Heaven, or something we do after we really know we believe in Jesus. Instead being baptized *is* Christian Life. In the waters we join in Christ's dying and rising, just as we are called to do everyday throughout our lives of service to God and God's Children.¹⁴ The Church also makes promises to help and guide us through our walk with Jesus (a promise you all are living out this summer as camp counselors). Tying this all together, the waters of Baptism place Christ's cross upon us, forever binding us to Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and the promises wrapped up in that.

Holy Communion is a sacrament that there is a lot of misunderstanding about, especially considering how important is to our lives as a community in Christ. **In the bread and wine of communion we encounter the physical presence of Christ's body and blood.**¹⁵ It isn't just a fond remembrance of what Christ did for

¹³ "But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, o Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel; Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you..." (Isaiah 43:1)

¹⁴ "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

¹⁵ "Then he took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for your. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,

us, but we also don't need to have any complicated ways of explaining how Christ is really there. As Lutherans we are quite fond of saying that Christ is **"In, With, and Under"** the bread and the wine of communion. So if someone were to ask where Christ's real physical presence is in communion, the more difficult thing would actually be to say where He isn't.

So why is this physical presence so important? Well imagine if you constantly told someone that you loved them. You could write them the most beautiful poetry, and leave thousands of flowers, and buy them brightest most flawless diamond to express this love. Still if you did all this but had no physical contact with them (a hug, kiss, pat on the back, ect.) it would seem hard to convince them you actually did love them. As our creator God understands our need for physical contact and comfort. That's why he sent His son Jesus to us as a human, and that's why Jesus physically comes to us in the bread and wine.

How do we say it?

A lot of questions campers will come to you this summer will revolve around God's promises for us. **The sacraments are real physical signs God has given us of those promises.** When campers ask "How do I know if I'm saved or not?" we point back to the waters of baptism, the promises God made there and the gifts given.

"This cup is the new covenant of my blood." Luke 22:19-20

When a camper asks “How do we know God has forgiven us?” we point to communion and Jesus’ offering of His body and blood for us. Not only does that put us back into relationship with God, but it is working to bring us back into relationship with other Christians as we gather around God’s table.

Many of our camps have programs for Mentally Challenged campers. The childlike faith of these campers is an incredible gift and witness to all who are lucky to be around them. When we ask questions about “What does it take to really be baptized?” or “But doesn’t someone really need to understand communion to really receive it?” we should lift up these campers as Saints among us. Who would doubt that Christ is truly present to them in the water, the bread, the wine, but do you think they have come to a full understanding of the ways the Holy Spirit works through the sacraments. If Christ truly stands with and loves the lowly and humble in spirit, these Christian brothers and sisters are truly examples of the free gifts of the sacraments.

Images of family can be really helpful in talking to campers about the sacraments. Baptism is our new birth into God’s family, and just like our own families that we are born into there is nothing we did to deserve or earn this acceptance and love. The action and gift in Baptism is God and God’s alone. We can also point towards the family dinner table when we think about communion. The dinner

table can be (and for many people hopefully is) a place where we are brought back together after long and challenging days apart, given real tangible signs of our love for each other, and where hurts and divisions can be healed.

A growing and very legitimate concern is the reflection of the broken state of modern families upon the use of family imagery in talking about God. It is true that using some of the family imagery talked about above may be confusing for someone who comes from a broken and abusive family, and as counselors and leaders we should grow to know our campers so that we are aware of and caring for such situations. This should not keep us from using family imagery though, because in such situations we are given an opportunity to witness to the fact that brokenness and abuse is not what God desires for God's Children, that the Church is a community that stands with the broken and abused and should help them out of and through of their situation, and that what God desires for us in the end is to be wrapped up in the divine life in the family of the Trinity.

Where does this call us?

As said above **the waters of baptism is where our callings as Christians are rooted.**¹⁶ It is here that we receive the Holy Spirit and all the gifts that brings. From these waters we receive our identity as

¹⁶ "See to it first of all that you believe in Christ and are baptized. Afterward, see to your vocation." (WA 37:480)

first and foremost Children of God. As campers wrestle with all the many things the World is trying to tell them they are (or are not) and as we all wrestle with our callings in the world, it is important to always return to that primary and singular identity as Children of God. Stripping away all of the Worlds expectations, labels, and demands upon us often necessary in hopes of finding God's calling for us and is possible through the waters of Baptism.

Communion always keeps before us the sacrifice and service that a life of following Christ calls us to, and places us in the midst of those people we are called to serve. The relationship with Christ established in Communion is not just a "me and Jesus" relationship, but is one where we are surrounded by our Brothers and Sisters in Christ (even those we don't quite get along with and those we might choose to keep our distance from) and brought into a servant relationship with them. And just in case we had forgotten, the fact that it is Jesus' body and Jesus' blood that is placed before us should always remind us it is not merely our sacrifice and our service, but it is an act of Christ through us.

Exploring God's calling for us all is often an experience of quite, slowing down and letting the gifts that God has so richly blessed us with work through us. Hopefully this summer at camp can be a place apart, an opportunity to let that happen for you and your campers.

Prayer

Loving God, we praise you for and marvel at the ways you make yourself present to us in this world, especially Christ's sacraments of Baptism and Communion. So often we try to build our own ladders up to relationship with you which crumble under the weight of sin and death. Return us to the waters and the table so that we can minister to our campers about and live in the incredible promises you have made to us. **AMEN**

Camp Applications

- Use the many opportunities that we have around water at camp (swimming, canoeing, rafting) to talk about Baptism.
- At meal times remember the gifts of communion and how Christ feeds us and brings us back together.
- In your care for campers you are a physical presence of safety and love for them, just as Jesus is for us in Baptism and Communion.

The Church: The Body of Christ

Talking Points

What do we say?

- The Church is the gathering of the Baptized, the assembly of all those called together in worship of God.
- We talk of Christians as saint and sinner (*simul istus et peccator*) at the same time.
- The Church is wherever the Baptized congregate and the “Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are rightly administered.”

How do we say it?

- The children and youth that you welcome into your cabins this summer are the Church!
- Christians are a forgiven and forgiving people.
- The Church is a community that lifts up and calls on those who might think that they have nothing to give to the Kingdom.

Where are we called?

- Just as Christ came for the salvation of the World, the Church exists for the sake of the World.
- “How will God work through me in this calling to heal the brokenness in this World and bring about **reconciliation**?”
- Recognize that God may have a very specific calling for you in the Church.

What do we say?

So far we have talked about how God works through relationships, how the Holy Scriptures are read as a relationship, and the Sacraments wrap us up and bring us into relationship with God and one another. But what does that relationship that we keep talking about look like in the world? This is where the Church comes in.

The relationships that we help to build this summer between ourselves and campers, and most importantly between campers and Christ, are what the Church is made of. **The Church is the gathering of the Baptized, the assembly of all those called together in worship of God.**¹⁷ All that might sound pretty high and mighty, and quite a billing to live up to, but we need to remember two things. First, the Church is called together by God through the Holy Spirit through the Word, Baptism, and Communion. The Church is not just a social gathering of like minded folks that get together and it is not held together by our own hard work and initiative. Instead the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit in the world to make the Kingdom of God visible. Secondly, the Church has a very specific mission which is to love and worship God. The Church isn't a self-

¹⁷ All who believed were together and had all things in common...Day by day as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home, and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts 2:44, 46, 47)

help group, but through love and worship of Christ are wounds are healed. The Church isn't a group that gets together just for games and pot-lucks, but fun and fellowship are definitely forms of love and worship in the Holy Spirit. This summer as we walk with our campers, guided by the Word and the Spirit, may all of our actions from crafts to swimming be done in love and worship of the name of Jesus Christ. It is then that we are Church.

All this high talk about the Church probably raises one big question in your mind. "What about all those times that I've been let down by another Christian?" or "What about all the hurtful things that have been done by the Church in the name of faith?" Simply put, what about all the hypocrites? As Lutherans we do not proclaim everyone sinless and perfect the moment they become Christians. Instead we understand that before the return of Christ all humanity, even Christians, remain in our struggle with sin. We will still do bad things, and we will still fall short of the Glory of God. If we were able to avoid sin and reach the heights of God on our own, why would we still need Jesus? **We talk of Christians as saint and sinner (simul *istus et peccator*) at the same time.**¹⁸ While we still struggle with sin and know that we must constantly be called back to Christ for confession and forgiveness, we also know that in the waters of Baptism we have been given the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live out the

¹⁸ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. (Romans 7:19,20)

lives of holiness Christ calls us to. So in a way being a hypocrite is partly the point of the existence of the Church, but right along side that is our calling to be people of confession and forgiveness.¹⁹

Also don't think that just because we do not have the "smells and bells" of High Church or our songs are played on guitar and not an organ we're not part of the Church. Strictly defined **the Church is wherever the Baptized congregate and the "Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are rightly administered."** Sounds like a high calling, but through prayer, patience, and most importantly the Grace of God which makes all things possible God's ministry here at camp, from singing sessions to Capture the Flag, will be just as "churchly" as Mass at high noon in Westminster Chapel.

How do we say it?

The children and youth that you welcome into your cabins this summer are the Church! Our mission this summer is not to convince them that joining the Church would be a great thing for them to do. Instead we must recognize that they are already full members of the Body of Christ and together we get to explore and discover where our callings in that might be.

Earlier we talked of members of the Church being "saint and sinners" at the same time. That's going to be really important to remember this summer as we work together and we live with the

¹⁹ "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." (LW 31:25)

children entrusted to us. We will fall short of each others expectations; we will break promises; campers will act in ways that confuse and hurt us. **It is in those times that the primary nature of the Church, the Body of Christ, all of us here as Christians comes to light, as we are a forgiven and forgiving people.**²⁰ Throughout this summer think of how the Holy Spirit's gifts of confession and forgiveness give us a way to make even our shortcomings a witness to the grace and goodness of Jesus Christ. That God would come in human form, suffer our ridicule and punishment for the sake of our sinfulness, and then rise again, offer forgiveness, and then assemble us as a summer camp staff to work under His name is ridiculous enough. To add to that the fact that we have been brought together as His holy Church, His Body, is a truth that is just too good to keep to ourselves.

Your life together for a week as a cabin, area, small group, ect. is a prefect place to teach campers about how the Church works and how God works in, through, and on the Church. Teaching your campers how do hold each other accountable by using tools like a cabin covenant or delegated jobs is a very tangible way to show how God gives us each other to help us when we fall and when we are faithful. Make sure to spend time talking about the variety of gifts that you see in each of your campers this summer, and have them be

²⁰ And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

on the lookout for each others gifts. **The Church is not only a place that we develop our own gifts, but it is a community that lifts up and calls on those who might think that they have nothing to give to the Kingdom.**

Where are we called?

All of this talk about the Church can not pass without making clear that the Church does not exist for the enjoyment of its own. **Just as Christ came for the salvation of the World, the Church exists for the sake of the World.**²¹ When we think about our callings in the Church this summer and beyond, whether they are pastor or youth minister, after-school teacher or lector, we must think of how they will be a ministry to the World and a witness to Christ Jesus. This can be a tough thing for our campers (and us) to understand but we don't just do "Christian kinda stuff" when we are with other Christians, and we don't switch into secular/worldly mode the moment we step out those red doors on Sunday. Instead our ministry and calling should be a public witness to the world of the Grace and Mercy of Jesus Christ. Even though we find ourselves in a place apart this summer at camp, we are also involved in a very public ministry of Christian community as campers and parents come and go and take stories with them of their time with us.

²¹ And [Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

We have also talked a great deal about the importance of confession and forgiveness in the Church. As we set our sights towards the callings God has for us in the Church and the World it is important to ask, **“How will God work through me in this calling to heal the brokenness in this World and bring about reconciliation?”**²² Trust me, there is enough brokenness to go around in the world, so though most any calling we can allow the Holy Spirit to bring about reconciliation. It is important though to recognize the importance of confession and forgiveness in making this happen, and that these things are only possible through the gifts God so graciously gives us.

Lastly, **recognize that God may have a very specific calling for you in the Church.**²³ Christ’s Church needs pastors, leaders, and ministers. Take time this summer to look at the examples of these callings that surround you. Ask questions. Try on the job of theologian and worship leader and see how it fits you. And most importantly, pray and leave yourself open to the incredible work of the Spirit found amongst the Body of Christ, the Church.

Prayer

²² All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

²³ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

Jesus, we thank you for the gift of your Body and Blood that bring us together as your Holy Church. Forgive us for the places we continually fall short and all ways bring us back to your house where forgiveness and reconciliation are a reality. Send us forth this summer as healed leaders to follow your commandment and “feed your lambs”. **AMEN**

Camp Applications

- In your cabin groups establish a cabin covenant at the beginning of the week to illustrate how your group is bonded together.
- Teach campers in and practice the Church’s institutions of confession and forgiveness when disagreements and fights arise between campers.
- Help campers explore their gifts and how they are a valuable gift to the Church. Use these gifts in the camp setting through service and ministry to other campers.
- Talk to campers about their home congregations. Find out what they like and what they do not like. Encourage them to take back the joy they have found from their time at camp to add to the ministry and worship of their home church.

Part 5

Salvation: Wrapped up in the Divine Life

Talking Points

What do we say?

- The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is central to the salvation of humanity.
- It is not our own obedience and faithfulness that secures our salvation, but it is Jesus' obedience and faithfulness that secure these things for us.
- The reality of salvation is already visible in the ways that Jesus Christ is working in our world.
- Salvation in Christ is a physical reality, not just something spiritual.
- For Lutherans, any talk of the Rapture theology of the second coming of Christ is very far from our confessed beliefs.

How do we say it?

- Talk of salvation, heaven and hell, can be a really scary thing for our campers.
- Remembering God's promises made to us in Scripture, Baptism, and Communion is important when thinking about something as daunting as salvation.
- Salvation is not something limited to a distant unknown future but is a reality and a promise in our midst.

Where are we called?

- Ministry is not just about saving souls, but working in the Spirit to make the Kingdom more visible to the world.
- As we explore our callings, embrace that freedom to serve one another in relationships of genuine love.
- Our salvation in Christ Jesus reminds us of the importance of relationship in our calling.

What do we say?

Now as we reach questions of salvation, ones which you no doubt will face this summer from campers, we have come back full circle to the topic that we began with; Jesus Christ. Despite all of our differences and division one point that is universal for Christianity is that **the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is central to the salvation of humanity.**²⁴

Lutherans consider salvation not only an act only possible through Jesus, but by Jesus as well. **It is not our own obedience and**

²⁴ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6,7)

faithfulness that secures our salvation, but it is Jesus' obedience and faithfulness that secure these things for us.²⁵ Through faith in Christ Jesus, which itself is a gift of the Spirit, we are imparted with the gifts of Christ which secure our salvation from sin and death. This is what it means when we say that we are "justified by grace through faith".²⁶ **Justification** is the process by which through Christ, despite our sinful and broken state, we are acceptable in the sight of God. This does not mean that our sins are whitewashed or that God just pretends they are not there; instead when we are imparted with the gifts of the Holy Spirit (through the Word and the Sacraments), when we are wrapped up in the life of Jesus in the Body of Christ (through the relationships and service of the Church), our salvation becomes a reality.

This points us towards two important points about salvation. First, **the reality of salvation is already visible in the ways that Jesus Christ is working in our world.**²⁷ Through the Word, the Sacraments, the Church, and many innumerable ways (many of which you'll be witness to this summer) the Kingdom of God is breaking through into our broken and fallen world. We talk about the Kingdom of God being "**already and not-yet**", or that while Jesus

²⁵ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

²⁶ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God... (Ephesians 2:8)

²⁷ "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

lives and the first gifts of the Kingdom are with us, we don't experience the Kingdom fully until Christ returns again.

Second, **salvation in Christ is a physical reality, not just something spiritual.**²⁸ We've seen that our relationship in Christ is made up of physical stuff (Word, water, bread, wine, and other people), and Christ himself felt it necessary to come in human form; so why would our life in him be any different? The promise of eternal life in Christ is a promise of our physical resurrection and right relationship with Christ. Both the power of death (which brings an end to our physical life) and sin (which destroys our right relationship with God) are destroyed through Christ.

In the midst of the current climate of Christianity in our culture it is important to make one point very clear. **For Lutherans, any talk of the Rapture theology of the second coming of Christ is very far from our confessed beliefs.** This way of understanding scripture professes that at some predictable time (based upon Biblical prophecy) Christ will return to secretly take away those with pure faith, and leave the others to suffer through a time of tribulation where the anti-Christ will rise to power. At the end of this time Christ will return again to defeat the anti-Christ and establish a New Jerusalem. It would take a while to go into the scriptural misunderstandings that feed this belief, but it is important to note

²⁸ Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? (1 Corinthians 15:12)

that this is a belief that has only taken hold within the past century. It also makes salvation far too individualistic and based upon the faith a person has in their heart, and witnesses to a God who is quite manipulative and deceptive. The images which fill the pages of popular rapture literature like *Left Behind* do not witness to the Triune God of grace which loves and cares for creation. Instead we witness to the God of Grace and Mercy found in scripture and to a salvation found in the Body of Christ, the fellowship of all the Baptized.

How do we say it?

Talk of salvation, heaven and hell, can be a really scary thing for our campers. It is also going to be something that will really get their curiosity going. One important thing to remind yourself whenever conversations like this arise is how much of an impact your words have on your campers. Do not be afraid to encourage conversation and help campers ask questions, but do not fall victim to the temptation to try and answer everything thrown your way. If you don't know exactly how someone gets to heaven, or you're not quite sure if hell really exists, know that you are not alone. Remember the resources of Scripture and other Christians that surround you, and if those do not answer your questions turn to the Faith found in prayer. Faith doesn't mean that we do not ask

questions of God, but that we remain open to those things that we don't have answers for and remember God's promises.

Remembering God's promises made to us in Scripture, Baptism, and Communion is important when thinking about something as daunting as salvation.²⁹ We can point towards the promises made in the story of Noah's Ark, and in the words of Jesus. We can remind our campers of the sign of the cross made on them at their baptism and how God sees that and never forgets. And we can point towards the forgiving and renewing presence of Jesus every Sunday in communion.

As we have said, these promises are ways that we are already seeing the Kingdom of God breaking into this world. **Salvation is not something limited to a distant unknown future but is a reality and a promise in our midst.**³⁰ This salvation is a reality and a promise that we can live in and enjoy this summer as campers come to us to be in intentional Christian community. It is both a promise and a reality in the love of Christ Jesus that forms our community as a staff this summer. And it is a promise and a reality in the relationships we form in Christ!

Where are we called?

²⁹ For in [Christ] everyone of God's promises is a "Yes". For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen," to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

³⁰ For [God] says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and one a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see now is the day of salvation! (2 Corinthians 6:2)

How does this understanding of salvation inform our callings in life? First, **in our calling to ministry we should remember that ministry is not just about saving souls, but working in the Spirit to make the Kingdom more visible to the world.** In all that we do to encourage peace, reconciliation, and the proclamation of the Word we are in the ministry of salvation.

Secondly, we are reminded how salvation comes to us. We do not have to have the best job, or the largest bank account, or the highest position in the Church, or be the humblest of servants to deserve salvation. Instead through the Grace of Jesus Christ we are welcomed into the Church and given the gifts of the Spirit. Since none of this is achieved by our own good works, we are then freed to be a servant of all with no other motive than genuine love of God's children. **As we explore our callings, embrace that freedom to serve one another in relationships of genuine love.**³¹

And finally **our salvation in Christ Jesus reminds us of the importance of relationship in our calling.**³² This summer you are called to minister through relationship to your campers. As you explore your own calling here and in the future remember how important relationships have been in your own formation. Where is God calling you to be in relationship so that the Kingdom of God

³¹ As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. (1 Peter 2:16, 17)

³² The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them. (Psalm 25:14)

may be made clearer to the world? Where has Christ's relationship in you freed you to be in service to the World? As you go out to minister this summer keep these questions in your heart and be ready for the answers God brings!

Prayer

Gracious and merciful God we praise and thank you for the saving gift of your son Jesus Christ. We confess that too often we bend the truth of your saving story to our own desires. Return us to the truth of our relationship in you, through the Word, the Water, and the Wine, all found in your Holy Church, so that this summer we may faithfully witness to the incredible message of eternal life in you.

AMEN

Camp Applications

- Focus on the promises that God makes to us in Scripture and the Sacraments. Make each day of the week a different promise, from God's promise of the rainbow to the promise of relationship found in the Ten Commandments, and finally Christ's promise to be with us always.
- Throughout the day have campers look for ways that they have seen the Kingdom of God breaking into the world. Share and talk about them at the end of the day.

- Talk with and help campers practice their own skills and gifts in ministry.

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