



Camp and Retreat Sunday

Liturgy Resources for 2023 and Other Tips

The PC(USA) designates various days on the church calendar for special emphasis. Below are resources for celebrating Camp and Retreat Sunday on February 12, 2023. (Or whenever your faith community chooses to lift up Camp and Retreat Ministry.)

Revised Common Lectionary for Sunday 2/12/2023:

Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Psalm 119:1-8, 1 Corinthians 3:1-9, Matthew 5:21-37

(The liturgy resources below emphasize the Old Testament Reading from Deuteronomy.)

Suggested Hymns:

Lord, Prepare Me - Sanctuary (Glory to God 701)

As the Deer (Glory to God 626)

God is Calling through the Whisper (Glory to God 410,

Guide My Feet (Glory to God 741, Presbyterian Hymnal 354)

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me (Glory to God 700, Presbyterian Hymnal 369)

The Summons (Glory to God 726)

Or considering asking your congregation's campers or local camp director for some suggestions of favorite camp songs!

Call To Worship (from Psalm 119)

One: Happy are those whose way is blameless,

All: who walk in the law of the Lord.

One: Happy are those who keep God's decrees,

All: who seek God with their whole heart.

One: Happy are those who do no wrong, but walk in God's ways.

All: I will praise God with an upright heart.

One: Let us worship God.

Centering/Opening Prayer

Creator God,

You spoke the earth into being,

shaping the mountains, and forming the seas.

You provide the very places and spaces

that we use today to connect with each other, and with you.

Loving God,

You have named us, and called us your people.

You taught us what it means to live in community,

You gave us the ways we ought to live,

And when we needed more guidance, you sent us a teacher.

Through Jesus Christ,

In communion with the Holy Spirit,

We praise you, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

God, our teacher, you have set before us the ways you want us to live, but we fall short. You call us to do what is right, what is good, and what is holy. We are distracted by what is new, what is shiny, and what is easy. Forgive us. Help us to listen to your call, obey your commandments, and walk in your ways. Help us to be the people you have created us to be. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith (Brief Statement of Faith)

We trust in God,
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.

In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image,
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.

But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.

We deserve God's condemnation.

Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.

In everlasting love,
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
to bless all families of the earth.

Hearing their cry,
God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.

Loving us still,
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.

Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.

Prayers of the People

O God, we are so grateful.
We are grateful for the world that you created,
with so many places for us to encounter you.
We ask for your help as we care for the earth,
protecting the wilderness, and being good stewards of the land you have entrusted to us.

We are grateful for the ways you taught us how we ought to live
Through your commandments and through your son Jesus Christ.
We ask for your patience as we struggle,
Knowing we desperately want to choose life and blessing.

We are grateful for the Church universal,
the community of faith that goes before us, with us, and behind us.

We ask for your guidance as we seek to do your work in the world,
that all may come to know you as Lord and Savior.

We are grateful for our camp and retreat centers,
and especially for Camp _____.
We ask for your blessing on all the ministry that happens there,
that all those who spend time at camp return more connected to you.

We are grateful for this congregation,
For our fellowship and ministry together.
We ask for your blessings as we listen to your call,
obey your commandments, and walk in your ways.

We are grateful for our loved ones,
And the many ways you show your love through them.
We ask for your presence with them on the journey,
That they too may feel your loving embrace.

O God, we are so grateful. Amen.

Sermon Notes for Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Scripture Context

- The people of God (having crossed the Red Sea and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years) are about to complete their sojourn in the wilderness and enter the promised land.
- Today's passage is at the end of Moses' farewell speech. After a book's worth of specific instructions, Moses gives a closing exhortation.
- Leadership then passes to Joshua - almost directly after this passage, Joshua takes on the mantle of leadership.

Moses' Charge to the People

- Moses summarizes the Law, and the Covenant between God and the people.
- At the end of all this, Moses seems to be responding to the concern: When the people reach their new home, will they forget what they have learned in the wilderness?
- So he tells them: Choose life, not death. Choose to love God, walk in God's ways, and follow God's commandments. Choose to live. Choose God.

The "Away" of the Wilderness

- The people of God have been in the wilderness for a while.
- Wilderness is both significant as a place of challenge, and a place **away** from ordinary life. And God uses that time to shape and form the people.
 - In the Wilderness, God sends the people **away** from life as they know it.
 - In the Wilderness, they are shaped and formed by God for their future in the ordinary.
 - *Building* their society and community
 - *Learning* new practices of worship
 - *Listening* to God's words
- God is often found in the wilderness.

Camp and Retreat Ministry

- Our camp and retreat centers are often physically in the wilderness, but more importantly, they offer a place **away** from the ordinary.
 - Our ordinary might be home, school, work, family systems, friends, communities, etc. At camp, people are away from their everyday lives, from their burdens, and from their distractions.
- Camp and Retreat Centers offer a place **away** from ordinary life, a place where God can shape and form the people of today.
 - In the **away** (at camp), people are given the chance to:

- Escape from destructive habits
 - Get out of familiar but unjust systems
 - Experience Creation
 - Listen for God
 - Focus on living in intentional community
- In the **away** (at camp) is where folks can reconnect with Creation, with each other, with themselves, and with God.
- Camp and retreat centers can offer:
 - *Building* - Session retreats to *build* the plans for the upcoming year
 - *Learning* - Summer camps where campers *learn* bible stories, songs, prayers, and new forms of worship
 - *Listening* - Sabbath Retreats offer space to rest and to *listen* for God's call

Return to the "Ordinary"

- The time away prepares for the time to come.
- Moses' listeners were faced with this choice. And so are we.
 - When they reach "home" will they be led astray and forget all that they have learned?
 - Will they go for what is easy, or shiny, or highly advertised on social media?
 - Or will they commit to God - loving God, walking in God's ways, obeying God's commandments, and live?

Other tips

- Consider inviting your local camp director or a camper or summer staff member from your congregation to help lead worship! If they aren't available on 2/12, consider welcoming them for a moment for mission, worship leadership, or an information session another time.
- Remember your camp on other Sundays as well. Include announcements in your bulletin, recruit staff and campers, and build a relationship with the director(s) and board members.
- Camp is for everyone! Learn more about the program offerings at your local camp or retreat center for people of all ages.
- Host a retreat at your local camp! Even if it's just a day trip, camps provide beautiful space and hospitality for volunteer opportunities, Session trainings and meetings, youth outings, and family gatherings. Be sure to plan a campfire and bring supplies for s'mores!
- If you are looking for other resources or information about camps outside your area you can learn more from Office of Christian Formation, or these websites for PCUSA experiences - [Summer to Remember](#) (for summer staff), [BookaRetreat](#) (for retreat groups) and [BestSummerYet](#) (for summer camps) or from the [Presbyterian Church Camps and Conferences Association](#). In addition, Brian Frick is the Mission Associate for Camps and Conference Ministries in the Presbyterian Mission Agency ([Camps and Conference Ministries](#))

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 Office of Christian Formation www.pcusa.org/formation
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