

Camp and Retreat Sunday Worship Service Wilderness Encounters

Welcome and Announcements

Minute for Mission Prior to Camp and Conference Sunday identify those in your congregation (or other local congregations) who have worked at a camp and conference center. (You could contact your nearest PCUSA camp and ask them for a list of names and their contact information.) Invite one or more of these folks to share briefly how their work at camp shaped them and helped them grow spiritually and professionally.

Gathering Song Begin by singing a gathering song that may be familiar to campers in the congregation. Check with your local camp director for suggestions. "Sanctuary" or "I've Got Peace Like a River" or "Spirit of the Living God" would be appropriate choices.

Call to Worship

Leader: If we come here hoping You will confirm all our beliefs and values

People: Convict us that our thoughts are not Your thoughts.

Leader: If we come here uncertain we are welcome

People: Embrace us in Your loving arms.

Leader: If we come here longing for Your Word

People: Open our ears to hear it.

Leader: If we come here merely out of habit

People: Meet us as we are and transform us into what You call us to be.

All: How ever we come here, let us now worship God!

Hymn of Praise A praise hymn that references God's creation would be fitting. Some suggestions include, "Morning Has Broken" "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" "How Great Thou Art" "All Creatures of Our God and King" "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" or "All Things Bright and Beautiful."

Prayer of Confession (Taken from *The Pattern of Our Days Worship in the Celtic Traditions from the Iona Community*, Kathy Galloway, Editor)

God of the spirit of kindness, in the glory of earth and sea and stars, in the kaleidoscope of color and shade and shapeliness, in the patterns of humor and tenderness and touch, we celebrate your generosity. Forgive us when we forget the gift in our every breath, the care that sustains our every moment, the grace that can transform our every day. Set us free from the prison of grudging hearts, mean desires, resentful spirits. Give us the courage to act with justice and generosity, and draw us into love that does not calculate or keep scores...(silent prayer)...Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Through the cross of Christ, God have mercy on you, pardon you, and set you free. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

Prayer for Illumination

Almighty God, your Word does not return to you empty, therefore we trust in Your power to silence in us any voice but Your own. We anticipate the promptings of the Holy Spirit that will take us to people and places yet unknown so that we might proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ where ever You lead us. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Exodus 18:13-27

Acts 8:26-40

Proclamation of the Word

“Wilderness Encounters”

In both these passages the main characters find themselves in the wilderness as a result of being obedient to God’s call. Moses has led the people out of Egypt and now is overwhelmed by their needs. Philip has followed the Spirit’s instructions and gone on the wilderness road and encountered the Ethiopian eunuch. Neither had anticipated their role in God’s plans and yet through their willingness to go into the unknown God uses them to lead others. The Holy Spirit frequently sends people into the wilderness, a space not fully known and often frightening, in order to equip and use them to further God’s salvation history and bring others into God’s covenant community.

Many people have discovered and honed leadership skills through answering God’s call to work at camp and conference centers. Often they learn that God has equipped them in ways they had not known until they were placed in positions of leading and caring for others. Some have learned, like Moses, the importance of shared leadership and empowering others. Some have been more like Jethro, offering the gift of wisdom and experience to those new to their responsibilities. Like Philip, many have encountered the stranger and those with radically different experiences because they followed the prompting of the Spirit. Camp is often the place for such encounters and through their training and on the job experiences those who work in camps and conference centers have often answered the questions of those seeking God, helping them understand God’s Word and God’s will.

Invite leaders in your congregation to share, in writing, a time when they were in a position of leadership. Suggest that they share how they felt, what had prepared them, maybe what they would have done differently, who mentored them, and where they felt the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit at that time. It may be as simple as when an elder had to pray aloud in public for the first time, or the first funeral the minister conducted. It could be as daunting as having to perform CPR on someone who was dying. Perhaps it was a time when they were called upon to speak up on behalf of another. Invite youth and young adults to participate. Seek out those who have been camp counselors or youth who have been counselors in training. One option is simply to read these stories aloud in worship. Another would be to read the stories and intersperse them with images that highlight the emotions or setting or with Scripture passages that echo the

sentiments expressed. Close with the prayer below or with one of your choosing that gives thanks for the leadings and power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Caring God, we thank you for calling and equipping leaders to participate in your work in the world:

for those who have loved us enough to correct us,
may we have teachable spirits and heed their wisdom;

for those who have allowed us to grow through failure and mistakes,
may we gain both insight and humility from these experiences;

for mentors who have seen gifts in us that we never knew we had,
grant us the discipline to hone our gifts for your use.

We pray:

for all of those who are in the midst of the wilderness, uncertain and afraid,
envelop them with your peace and assure them of your constant presence;

for those who know they are called but have yet to say, "Here I am,"
confirm in them not their own worthiness or ability, but your power and providence;

for camp directors, counselors and campers,
may their time in the wilderness bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ and bring light to the world.

We thank you, Lord God, for all of those who have followed the leadings of your Holy Spirit and gone to unexpected places and people in order to proclaim the good news about Jesus. Uphold them, and us, as we all seek to be faithful, going to where ever you send us, even if it is the wilderness road, trusting that you use us and are with us. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

Hymn Suggestions: #377 (blue hymnal) Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore, #426 (blue hymnal) Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak, #343(blue hymnal) Called as Partners in Christ's Service or The Summons (Sing the Faith)

Presentation of Tithes and Offerings (part of the offering might be designated to your local camp and conference center)

Offertory

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn Suggestions: 435 (blue hymnal) We Are All One in Mission, #432(blue hymnal) Song of Hope, #418(blue hymnal) God, Bless Your Church with Strength!

Charge and Benediction

Following the service offer a time of fellowship and invite those who shared their stories for the proclamation to be available to talk with worshippers. Set up tables with pictures from camp and retreats. Invite member to bring photos to share. Put together a slide show and let it run throughout the fellowship time. Set up a table with lists of the PCUSA Camp and Conference centers and invite people to take home the list and include them in their prayers. A list of member camps of the PCCCA can be found here

http://www.pccca.net/directory_of_sites.php?ViewRegion=all