



## Camp and Retreat Sunday

Liturgy Resources for Year B and Other Ideas

The PC(USA) designates various days on the church calendar for special emphasis. Camp and Retreat Sunday is usually the second Sunday in February. Below are resources for celebrating Camp and Retreat Sunday on February 11, 2024. (Or whenever your faith community chooses to celebrate Camp and Retreat Ministry.)

Revised Common Lectionary for Year B ([2/11/14](#)): Transfiguration of the Lord  
2 Kings 2:1-12, Psalm 50: 1-6, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, Mark 9:2-9

### **Hymns Suggestions:**

Spirit of the Living God	(Glory to God 288)
We Are One in the Spirit	(Glory to God 300)
Gather Us In	(Glory to God, 401)
The Summons	(Glory to God, 726)
Kum ba Yah	(Glory to God, 472)
Prayer of St. Francis	(Glory to God, 753)
I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me	(Glory to God 700 / Presbyterian Hymnal, 369)
Go With Us Lord	(Glory to God, 748 / Presbyterian Hymnal, 535)
Lord, Prepare Me - Sanctuary	(Glory to God 701)
Guide My Feet	(Glory to God 741, Presbyterian Hymnal 354)

*Considering asking your congregation's campers or local camp director for some suggestions of favorite camp songs to include as congregational singing or for a group of campers to sing!*

### **Call to Worship**

**One:** Creator God,

**Many:** In the beginning you shaped our world and made us in your image.

**One:** Redeeming God,

**Many:** Your love is greater than anything else.

**One:** Sustaining God,

**Many:** You are with us now.

**One:** Let us worship God.

### **Centering/Opening Prayer**

Awesome God,

Let us to be present with you now, and until we come to you in worship again.

We hear your voice around the corners of our lives;

God, help us bring your wisdom to the center of who we are.

Replace our fixation on production with patience;  
Override our need for control with blessings.  
Set our sights farther than today's to-do lists and tomorrows anxieties;  
that we may see the mountains brought low and the valleys made a plain.  
Relax our jaws; open our hands; drop our shoulders; quiet our fears.  
You are the God of life. You are with us now. We give you thanks, O God. Amen.

### **Prayer Confession**

**God of life,**

**We confess that want to be with you on the mountain, but do not wish to climb. We wait for whirlwinds and chariots of fire but ignore opportunities to live out the Gospel. We ask you to part the waters for us but are too afraid to make life easier for our neighbors.**

**You call us to transcend mortal ways of living. Help us to leave behind those things that do not bring you glory; that we may be fully transformed by your power and love. Amen**

### **Affirmation of Faith: A New Creed**

*(United Church of Canada, 1968, rev. 1980, 1995)*

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.  
We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.  
We trust in God.  
We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God.

### **Prayers of the People**

O God,  
Who spoke the world into being:  
We are restored by the pieces of the garden that surround us  
The garden where we first were with you.  
Let us protect and grow and keep our Eden  
That we may rest and find joy.  
God who met us in person  
We find you at a table full of friends and strangers.  
Help our eyes meet; our mouths quiet and our ears open; and our hands open

That we might see your grace reflected in each other.  
 Transforming God:  
 Be with those who are sick, injured, lost, or alone.  
 We especially pray for \_\_\_\_\_ (*congregation prayer requests*) \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 Bring healing and love to those most in need.  
 Help us to be your instruments of mercy to those all around us,  
 Making us new each morning.  
 God who created us in your image;  
 Who knows us better than ourselves:  
 Drive us to those places that you have set apart;  
 That we may practice closeness with you  
 And those we meet around the campfire.  
 We give thanks especially for camp \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Bless their ministry and those who are called to serve.  
 As well, we give you thanks for the beloved in our community here.  
 We especially lift up \_\_\_\_\_ (*congregational joys*) \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 On us, we ask for your continued blessings.  
 God who conquered death  
 Pour your spirit out on all of us;  
 that we may see the barriers that keep us from each other crumble.  
 May those who find themselves with earthly power use it for good.  
 Turn out greedy pockets and move all your people to give generously;  
 Take the guns out of our hands, and cover them with earth.  
 Transform our curses into blessings.  
 God who was before the beginning:  
 Your supreme power is greater than anything.  
 This we pray in the holy name of your son, Christ Jesus;  
 Who taught his disciples to pray saying.... **Our Father...**

### **Sermon Notes**

- Preface: Just as PC(USA) is uniquely American and shaped by our current place and time "Camp" is a phenomenon that is very American, and has been heavily shaped by our culture over the past 80+ years. It is a business model, a tax-designation (501c3 nonprofit for many), a stereotype (Meatballs, Friday the 13th, etc.), a format for ministry, childcare, discernment space (even for the nonreligious) and many more things. As well, we are blessed as Presbyterians to have a diversity of sites and programs. Your congregation members may have one or more of these ideas floating around when they hear "camp." It is strongly suggested that in the bulletin and/or at some other point in the service (announcements/minute for mission/wherever is appropriate) to tell the story of your congregation and the camp and conference centers they have had recent experiences with. This will better allow for a focused, prophetic sermon—important on Transfiguration Sunday.
- Speaking of which - Wow! Transfiguration Sunday and Camp and Conference Sunday have aligned. What a great occasion to highlight our camp ministries, which have many parallels:
  - Pausing the every-day storyline or routine to get away for spiritual pursuits (the mountain/camp).
  - Throughout the bible, the mountain is the place to commune with God. Also, scripture refers to this as a "high mountain apart." Our camps are frequently described as "a place apart," and often have long, decorated histories, with names of the community's heroes branded on benches and buildings. We (as the Church) have intentionally set

these places apart as holy domains where we might dwell for a short time and focus on spiritual renewal and communing with the holy.

- Similarly, camps are often referred to as “thin places,” where the spirit is more accessible. Many pastors and faith formation leaders have pointed to an experience at a camp or conference center as a major catalyst towards joining the clergy. As well, many campers and staff realize a calling towards non-ecclesial vocations of healing or justice while members of a camp community. To summarize: camp can be a place of transcendence.
- Another throughline is the small group. In our scripture today, Jesus takes only Peter, James, and John with him to the mountain. Presbyterian camping was founded on, and most commonly operates with, a small group model. This means that a staff member or two are attached to a group of kids that usually does not exceed 16. Through shared experiences, and a more accessible number of peers, campers are able to more easily find community with each other. Even larger PCUSA conferences take advantage of small groups for the same ends (in conjunction with large-group experiences in worship, recreation, etc.). This would be a great time to highlight small groups within your church.
- Sending. “Go and serve” is the parting words on a sign at one east coast PCUSA camp, visible to campers, their families, and any guests or visitors as the last thing they see on camp property. Peter, James, and John hear the very voice of God, affirming Jesus’s important role now and in the future. Jesus tells them to keep the whole thing quiet. These three disciples must certainly have this surreal moment burning in their hearts as they return to “normal life.” Similarly, camp and conference experiences can be so powerful and so different that reintegration afterwards is not a mere picking-up-where-you-left-off. Peter, James, and John will never be the same again; similarly, retreats and camps can be permanently transformational as well.
- God speaks out of the cloud: “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” This is one of very few moments where God’s voice is heard directly in any of the Gospels; in Mark, it is evocative of Jesus’s baptism (Mk 1:11), what is still perhaps *the* “transfiguring” event for all Christians. This parallel cements the idea of removal from culture/society for spiritual development, being changed by the holy, and returning different. This is beautifully connected to the important role that camps and conference centers have for all of God’s people.
- Suggestions:
  - Incorporate one or more stories from your local camp and conference center.
  - Summer camps are often one of the only child-and-youth focused ministries in a region with the PCUSA stamp.
    - Can you incorporate your children/youth/young adults into your service/sermon?
    - What about preparing a young adult who has been a camp staffer to help them use their prophetic voice and spiritual gifts during the sermon time? Camps focus on “experiential learning,” after all.
  - Leaning into the transcendent nature of this moment of scripture: challenge your congregation. When was the last time they pursued the ideas at the heart of camps, conferences, and retreats: rest, renewal, discernment, finding a place apart, recreation (re-creation)? It absolutely does not have to be at camp. A skilled pastor might be able to suggest other places where this is possible (e.g., the beach, public parks, a labyrinth

in or near your church, etc.) while still primarily lifting up our camps. The intention of these materials is obviously to lift up our camp and conference ministries, but we also do not want to gatekeep or draw up insider/outsider groups.

### **Other Ideas for Celebrating and Recognizing Camp and Retreat Sunday:**

- 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 this particular Sunday, consider welcoming them for a moment for mission, worship leadership, or an information session another time.
- Remember your particular area camp on other Sundays as well. Include announcements of events in your bulletin or help promote recruiting summer 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 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 PCUSA.
- If you are looking for possible curriculums to use for a retreat, [this Wakelet](#) has some ideas.

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Office of Christian Formation: [www.pcusa.org/formation](http://www.pcusa.org/formation)  
PCCCA: [www.pccca.net](http://www.pccca.net)

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