



# Sabbath Practices Ministry Kit for Camp

## *Hospitality, Prayer, Service, Storytelling and Retreat*

### introduction

When we think of “camp”, we may think both of a physical property or even a method of programming (day camp in a community for instance). For the purposes of this ministry kit we are referring to our camp and conference centers where we go for various retreats, youth and adult gatherings, day camps, and traditional residential summer camp. We will be exploring the ways in which sabbath practices happen in this sacred place and ways to engage that are particular to being at camp. It is natural for all the sabbath practices to be happening at a camp setting. Use this ministry kit alongside the essential tools for each practice as well as the age specific ministry kit that you are engaging with at camp. Each of the 5 practices in this ministry kit have a section of things to consider, ways to engage and a resource list is provided at the end of the kit. The kit is meant as a guide and a launch pad for leaders.

### Practicing Hospitality at Camp

*It is important to feel a sense of belonging and therefore purpose. When we extend radical hospitality to one another and welcome each other into authentic community, we are saying through our actions that each one of us belongs.*

### things to consider

By practicing hospitality, not only do we extend an invitation to others, but we are also formed and shaped in our own identity in the community. All other expressions of our practices grow out of our community – faithful individuals committed to and welcoming of each other.



When we talk about this practice, we want campers and retreat participants to understand the true, deep, and *radical* hospitality offered by Jesus Christ. Radical hospitality is a welcome that instills a “what’s mine is ours” and “you are a member of my larger family” and “I will be there for you” in a way a simple greeting and acknowledgement doesn’t reach.

Hospitality is about welcoming of all God’s people just the way they are. Look at the practices of your camp setting and discern how you are extending that welcome to all and particularly paying attention to those communities of people that don’t naturally find you. Those new to your group need extra invitation and welcome – be careful of



“insider” language and experience. Take the time to explain insider experiences and traditions so new campers and participants become welcomed insiders quickly.

When going away to camp for a week or even just a weekend retreat, we are in a special and unique place where hospitality is central to our shared experience. Consider planning for how you will practice hospitality to campers of all ages, parents leaving children and youth, those that have never been to this property or maybe have never had a camp experience.

Be aware of those with physical limitations, or whose cultural background does not normally include experiences in nature or away from their comfort zones. Be sure to view the camp property and activities through this lens no matter the age of those that will be participating.

Camp and retreat traditions are a wonderful bonding practice – as long as you are very intentional in your welcome of new campers and participants. Remember, hospitality is as much about putting yourself to the side to understand new participants as it is about having a fun time together.

Younger campers may be at a stage where most of their friends come from similar backgrounds and they may feel uncomfortable at first reaching out beyond their safety zone. Camp is a place where we can temporarily shed our established “home identities” to feel valued and loved for who we are, not what we do/have done. A strong camp and retreat leader will remember to invite each participant to bring their true self – bumps and all – to a no-judgement zone. We are modeling Jesus’ welcoming of all in our hospitality. Along with leaders extending this authentic welcome, we need to also encourage campers and participants to welcome not only their friends into their lives, but to make new ones as well.

### **engaging in hospitality**

**Welcome Signs** Make sure campers and retreat participants are “seeing” the welcome down the driveway, where they unload, at check in, near the cabins, on the sidewalks – get creative and make sure there are signs of welcome everywhere!

**Greet Before Camp or Retreat** Assign counselors and other staff to call every single camper a couple of days before camp to let them know everyone is excited to see them and find out if they have any questions. If that is not feasible, a letter of welcome from the leader just for welcome, not administration, will set the tone of welcome and hospitality the campers and retreat participants can expect. Taking it to the next level: If possible, find out something special about them (like their favorite candy or movie) and then find a way to personalize their sleeping area with that reference. Do something similar for retreat guests as they may be nervous about accessing the property, where to park, food etc.



**Introductions, Name Games** Being known by your name and knowing the names of others helps us relax and gives us the ability to engage without embarrassment. Include leaders and participants in name games. Adults will enjoy the silly games too so don't worry. They are as thankful to know names as they younger participants. Names may be the first step in building a hospitable community.

**Community Building** Communities form most quickly when we all participate in a new experience that brings laughter and movement. Silly is your friend! You can transition to games everyone can play. The M&M/Skittle game where each color represents something for them to share about their life. "Quick Line Up" has them line up silently by age, shoe size, birth month or height and meet those around them. "Two Truths and a Lie" where each person can share their uniqueness to the level which they are comfortable. These are activities that are accessible to all. Tag can include movement but recognize if all of your members are able to engage before you start a fast-moving activity. Being comfortable with your group is hospitality.

**Celebration Night** Have a set apart night for the celebration of a transition or milestone. This may be your senior night for high schoolers but could also be other milestones depending on the group. Consider the same for you and me camps and family retreats too. Make sure to include lots of affirmation of how they are unique and belong to a community. Camp is an ideal place to celebrate transitions and milestones.

### **Gifts of the Spirit**

Allow campers to work through their gifts of the Spirit, or any other personality "test." After, have campers share and write their top 3 up on larger piece of paper. At the end, the group will see all the names written across various "gifts" or personality traits and is a reminder that we are all part of the body of Christ, together.



## Practicing Prayer at Camp

*“Be still and know that I am God” - (Psalm 46:10).*

### things to consider

If designed intentionally, at camp and retreats campers are going to experience faith and God in ways they do not typically do so at home and so it may seem “easy” to them. Remind campers that this takes intentionality and practice at home.



No matter what age your campers are, we all have limited attention spans. Even if we are intentional about prayer times, our minds can wander. Set appropriate session lengths.

Intentionally find ways to connect prayer practices at camp with how the community of faith or church may be praying “back home.” Prayer and other practices in worship should not be completely disconnected with the community back home. You might bring the Lord’s Prayer as ways participants can easily cross over their camp and retreat experience back home.

There is often a worry we do not have the “right” thing to say and so we are nervous to pray out loud. Remind campers that there is no such thing as the “right” prayer and only that we are honest and sincere. Beyond that, it only takes a little bit of practice to be more comfortable praying out loud.

We are each wired differently, and some respond to written word, some to spoken word, some to music, and some to art, etc. The richest prayer life comes through experiencing God through multiple senses. Be creative to engage the senses and allow campers to explore prayer in various ways. In your creativity, remember that practices bring us together if they are repetitive. You may introduce different styles but be sure to repeat each style throughout your experience to help it “stick” as a practice beyond the camp or retreat experience.

Camps often have fun traditions of grace before a meal. Remember to couple this with a prayer that acknowledges a posture of gratitude for the meal and those that prepared it.

### engaging in prayer

**Writing the Psalms** Reflect on a few Psalms (you could start with Psalm 145 for praise, Psalm 86 for lament), and then write your own Psalm, simply writing a prayer to God for the circumstances they find themselves in.



**Coloring Pages** All ages can benefit from the slow pace of meditative coloring. Choose or create a coloring sheet related to your scripture/theme for the week. If doing this as a group, have a facilitator read scripture passages aloud with moments of silence as reflection as the group colors.

**Glow Prayers** Give each camper a glow stick and send them out into the fields at night, but do not have them “crack” it. Have them sit in silence for at least 5 minutes, “listening” to God’s word for them before they crack their glow stick. Once they are ready to crack their glow stick, they should “respond” to God and remember to allow God’s love to shine through them.

**Burden Weave** Have strips of cloth or even construction paper available and a wall with sections of yarn or string attached. Have campers write down the burdens they are carrying and pray about it. Then, when they are ready, have them come weave their burden through the sections of yarn, imaging themselves letting go of that burden and giving it to God.

**Wall of Thanksgiving** Attach large pieces of butcher paper to a side of a wall. Campers can draw or write as many things as they are thankful for throughout the week creating a mural of communal thanks.

**Prayer Rocks** Have each camper write their name on a rock when arriving to camp. During worship on the last night, have everyone move to select a random rock to bring home with them and commit to praying for this person throughout the year.

**Contemplative Spaces** Create multiple spaces around camp to reflect and meditate so a camper never has to go too far. These can be indoor and outdoor chapels, labyrinths, etc. Prayer stations can also serve as “pop up” contemplative prayer spaces at camps for any of your camps or groups to use. The natural world is an ideal place of prayer. Have prayer walks available as a contemplative space as well.



## Practicing Service at Camp

*Serving others is a way to take our group out into the world. “Love others as you love yourself” or the instructions in Matthew 25 to care for “the least of these” are clear directions that God expects our faith to have actions or “works” to be impactful in the world. To be a witness to God’s love, we need to extend that love to those outside of our community too.*

### things to consider

In a traditional camp experience, it may seem hard to practice service when we do not have the ability to “go” anywhere and be among different groups of people. Recognizing this, cultivating serving opportunities has to be a practice of intentionality.



This practice at camp might not become a full reality until they bring their mountain top experience down to the valleys, but there are still many ways we can serve while at camp though service to each other, service to the camp itself, and service from afar.

Service projects at camp, like improvement projects, are a way to pass on the wonder of the camp space to others. It’s a way to share the transformation we experience with those we won’t even meet.

Campers will often look for service “projects,” and while that is a good place to start, encourage conversation on what a project may look like versus walking alongside and seeing the need for reconciliation of the world. Discuss how injustice effects all of us.

Camps are increasingly becoming basecamps for service. Groups may be participating in workcamp at the facility or using the facility to retreat together in the evenings as they go out in the day for service opportunities. Consider how you interact and partner with these groups to further encourage the practice of service and retreat going hand-in-hand.

### engaging in service

**Remote Service** Check for local organizations near the camp and see if there is a way to help their mission that can be done remotely such as: writing letters to prisoners, working with food pantries or other organizations to assemble meal kits for those experiencing homelessness, working with churches to write cards to homebound members, etc. Who are the neighbors to the camp?

**Camp Clean up – Recyclable Art Project** Caring for creation is an act of service by protecting our environment. Have groups search the campgrounds for pieces of trash



and other items that do not “belong.” Afterward, use those items to create a poster or other art project to display the message “Save our Earth.” Or allow campers to use their creativity to come up with their own recyclable art project.

**Plant a Future** Have campers plant vegetation needed on site and future campers can add to it and tend to it.

**Staff Serve** Have staff serve their campers dinner (or another meal). From setting and clearing tables to refilling drinks. Whatever they can do to model service. Consider not letting campers in on the “scheduled” serving time and see if they notice staff was preaching the gospel without using words.

**Cabin Group/Small Group Create a Project** Allow campers to come up with ideas on how to serve the camp facility or staff. Ask them to come up with examples and how to implement over the week, but if they need help brainstorming: write thank you notes to kitchen/hospitality staff, clean camp equipment, organize arts and crafts area, grounds grooming, etc. Allow campers to take the lead on what kind of project they want to do as a group.

**Random Act of Kindness** Create cards with blanks to fill in and have campers be looking for ways they can gift a random act of kindness to someone else at camp. They fill in the blank and then give that card to the recipient after the act is completed. Give each camper 10 cards, 5 to use at camp, and 5 to bring home.

**Serve at Home** Make sure campers have practical ways they can serve once they leave camp by brainstorming and coming up with lists of activities and ideas in the world away from camp. They should each be able to physically take this list with them. You can brainstorm ways to serve as groups or on their own.

**Plastic Bag Mats** Instead of Arts in Crafts, or in conjunction with, give campers the opportunity to make sleeping mats out of plastic grocery bags (make sure you collect ahead of time or request campers to bring).

**Special Offering** Consider choosing a local organization near the camp and ask campers to bring an offering with them. Depending on the needs of the organization, this could be a monetary offering or a collection of canned foods, toiletries, or other items. During the week, spend time talking about the organization or invite speakers to come to camp to share their story. Ask campers to give an offering to help with the organization’s needs and send them home with a way to donate.



## Practicing Storytelling at Camp

*It is important for all of us to recognize we have individual stories, and that those stories are interconnected to the larger story of God's love and grace. By learning to tell and listen to each other's stories, we learn how God moves throughout our lives.*

### things to consider

Many young people have never thought about their own story and even more of them have never told their story to others. In addition, they will wonder if their story is “good enough.” They will likely be self-conscious and nervous. You may need to be creative in helping them learn the craft of storytelling in non-threatening ways and remind them everyone has a story.



Camp can be an ideal place for intergenerational storytelling to happen. Be intentional about incorporating storytelling practices across all ages of camps, programs and model this in the way you tell the story of your camp.

It is much easier for extroverts and bolder personalities to participate in storytelling and can unintentionally begin to monopolize the conversation. Make sure to create an environment that is safe for everyone to share their voice.

Sensitive subjects or inappropriate subjects may come up when asking for storytellers. Make sure there is a pastoral presence to help navigate some of these issues if they arise.

### engaging in storytelling

**I Wanna Know...** In small groups or cabin groups on the first day, have each camper take a small piece of paper and write a question on it. The question can be anything they would like to know about another member of the group. (i.e. How many times have you been to camp? What school do you go to? Do you play an instrument? Etc.) Put all of their pieces of paper in the center of your circle and then each camper will take a turn to read a random question to the group. Give everyone a chance to answer each question.

**One Word Stories** Give campers in a circle the title of a story. The group task is to create a story one word at a time, with each group member contributing one word as they go. See how far they can make it with the story still making sense. Although this is a silly and non-threatening way to tell stories, debrief the time by talking about how just like each word in the story, our own stories are unique and contribute to the greater story of the Kingdom of God.





**Bedtime Stories** Have counselors lead and model bedtime stories on the first night before bed, but also let the campers know they will be leading stories (volunteering) the following nights. Start with one funny story (it can be made up or something real), followed by a story about where they saw God move and work at camp that day.

**Retelling the scripture of the week (or day)** There are various ways that you can illustrate the scripture of the day or week to highlight the story. Remind campers that the story in scripture is written about people with their own stories, all connected to the larger story of God. You can read different versions of the scripture throughout the day including from “The Message.” You can have campers rewrite the story using modern characters, language, and context. You can have groups of campers retell the scripture through a skit, songs, charades.

**Tell your story through questions** Have a series of questions for campers to write in a journal so that when they are done answering, they have the framework their personal story. Questions could be both personal background and faith forming experiences. They can choose to share or not share their answers with the group.

**Emmaus Walks (derived from Luke 24)** At least once each day, schedule 20-30 minutes for Emmaus Walks. Pair campers up and each time you do this practice, campers should be with someone new. Each walk will have a specific guided question to help campers start their story. The first half of the walk, one camper shares their story and the other camper can *only* ask questions, then switch halfway through. The walk can go somewhere specific, or it can be free roaming.

**Learn the story of your camp** Interview summer staff, chaplains, worship leaders, hospitality staff, kitchen staff, parents, children, youth and more to share a little about their story of why they love camp. Interview parents after they’ve dropped off their children or when they pick up. Invite church members to end of week celebrations and interview them about their past and present camp experiences. These can be a combination of collected written stories and short film clips.

**Story Slam** Choose a topic, starting with less threatening ideas at the beginning, moving into a little more serious (either throughout one night, or through various sessions). Campers should sign up prior to the session to tell their story, giving them a 5-minute limit and guidelines for “appropriateness.” Make sure to have a few staff available if needed, but also make sure the amount of staff telling stories does not overwhelm the campers, who may be more uncertain if their story is “good enough.”

**Story-to-Go** Near the end of the camp week or a retreat, give campers time to write down their story of camp. Instruct them to write in a way so they can share it with family



or friends who are curious about what camp is like. What did they do at camp? How did they feel at the beginning and at the end of camp? Did they make new friends or try something new? How has their faith been challenged or how did their faith grow this week? What do they want to “take home” with them from camp?

**Testimonies** On the last day of camp, at one of the last evening sessions together, allow campers to share their testimony of what God has been doing in their life at camp this week. Have a few staff willing to share if there is a need to get things started or if there is a lull. This can be a very vulnerable time so make sure there are enough counselors and adults that can be available afterward for more time to talk and to pray with campers.



## Practicing Retreat at Camp

*The idea of retreat, renewal, refreshment and recharging is naturally imbedded into camp life. However, even at camp we can practice retreat by being intentional. When we leave a camp environment, retreat is not imbedded into our overscheduled lives at home and we will need tools to learn how to intentionally unplug away from camp.*

### things to consider

Retreat is really a small image of Sabbath – intentional time leaving the busyness of our worldly lives behind to enter the rhythms of undistracted time with God. Camp and retreat experiences inherently lead us away from our daily lives, but intentionality will make the experience a retreat/Sabbath instead of being seen as a series of different activities that replace our “normal” activities.



Because retreat is already practiced in the life at camp, if you are not intentional with this practice, the ability to practice it at home will be harder.

Many campers will oversimplify retreat and think it means binge watching TV all day and call it rest. It is important to distinguish Sabbath as rest that points us toward God and allows our spirit to be renewed.

Remind campers that rest does not always mean being still. It can mean doing something differently in order to give our minds and bodies a chance to disconnect from worry, and reconnect to God, even though uninhibited play.

Campers are coming from a plugged-in world, constantly connected. Brain chemistry is impacted by this and when removing technology, there is a very real detox and withdrawal process. Treat campers with grace if they are experiencing this.

Adult campers often struggle more with unplugging than young people! Consider how to balance your camp policies for connectivity hospitality and the desire to have a place where all can retreat.

### engaging in retreat

**All camp sleep-in day** Consider breaking from your normal schedule/rhythm and allowing campers *and* staff to sleep in. Instruct those that want to wake-up earlier to remain quiet until camp wake-up. You could consider serving brunch that day instead of breakfast, so your kitchen staff has some relief. Only serve a continental style breakfast for those that may wake earlier.



**Snort Game** Sit in a circle and “pass the pig” by snorting to the person next to you. The goal is to not laugh. Once someone laughs, they are out. Keep “passing the pig” until only one remains. To make it harder, no smiling. The point of this is no point other than simply to laugh. Laughter can be a great way to enjoy the moment – to feel the emotions around us.

**Picnic Lunch** Slow down the pace of mealtime by allowing campers to pack a “brown bag” lunch. Grab a tarp and some friends (or cabin groups, small groups, etc.) and take lunches out into the grounds to eat a picnic. This also helps your kitchen staff get some relief as well. (Do not forget to make sure campers understand where their trash belongs)

**Star Gazing** Before heading back to cabins for the night, instruct campers to find an appropriate place to spread out and take time to be in silence, gazing at the vast sky and stars above, and wonder about the mystery and vastness of God’s love for us. This works best if they are by themselves, within reason, to limit the goofiness that may arise. You could treat it as a night “devotional” time.

**Practice Silence** Each day, during a group worship or large gathering time, have campers practice mindfulness through stillness and silence together. The first time you could be in silence for two minutes. The next time four, the next eight, and then follow increasing intervals as you see fit. You can also have bells or another alarm in intervals throughout the day to take a minute of silence and reflection in the midst of activities.

**Unplug Worship** If you typically have a “plugged in” worship experience, or a fuller band, consider doing an acoustic unplugged worship.

**All-out Worship** If you typically have an “unplugged” worship experience, or even your average camp band experience, consider having a late night, all-out worship experience. Create an environment where campers worship uninhibited, letting go of all of their worries and allowing themselves to be “all in.” This would be a great contrast if you had an “unplugged” worship earlier in the day.

**No-technology day** If your camp is not already an “unplugged” camp, pick a day that campers/staff are not allowed to use their phones or other technology. Make sure they know this ahead of time so it is not thrown on them unexpectedly, as this will be difficult for some. Make sure to debrief this time the following day and process how hard it was, what made it easier and if it’s something they can consider doing at home sometimes.

**Staff Sabbath Breaks** Consider giving an additional and intentional “Sabbath” time break for your staff where they can practice truly unplugging and recharging their souls. Just 20-30 minutes in the middle of the day, with the only purpose to reconnect with God, can be a lifeline.



## Where can I learn more?

### Books

*Making Fun Out of Nothing at All: 101 Great Games That Need No Props* by Anthony Burcher and Mike Burcher. Healthy Learning, 2011.

*100 Activities That Build Unity, Community & Connection* by Jim Cain. Healthy Learning, 2017.

*Playing with a Full Deck: 52 Team Activities Using a Deck of Cards* by Michelle Cummings. Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2007.

*Recycled Craft Projects for Kids: 50 Fantastic Things to Make from Junk, Shown Step by Step in Over 400 Photographs* by Marion Elliott. Armadillo, 2014.

*Retreats for Renewal* by Nancy Ferguson. The Upper Room, 2007.

*Writing to God: Kid's Edition* by Rachel G. Hackenberg. Paraclete Press, 2012.

*Praying in Color, Kids Edition* by Sybil MacBeth. Paraclete Press, 2009.

*Cardboard Creations: Open-Ended Exploration with Recycled Materials* by Barbara Rucci. The Innovation Press, 2018.

### Curriculum

[Dixit](#). Libellud. (Board Game)

[Rememory](#). Storymatic Studios. (Card Game)

[Rory's Story Cubes](#). Zygomatic.(Storytelling Game)

[Table Topics: Questions to Start Great Conversations](#). Ultra Pro International, LLC.

[Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them, Leader's Guide](#) and [Student Book, Third Edition](#) by Alvin J. Vander Griend. Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2008.

[Word Teasers: Faith Edition](#). Big Ideas in Youth Ministry.

### Online Resources

["Creating Your Own Intergenerational Retreat."](#) Association of Presbyterian Church Educators.

[d365 devotions](#). Passport, Inc., co-sponsored by the Office of Christian Formation, PC(USA).

[Daily Prayer app](#). Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

["Earth Ministry for Children and Youth."](#) Washington Interfaith Power and Light.



[“Faith5.”](#) Faith Inkubators.

[“Fantastic Retreat Planners Guide.”](#) Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[“First Presbyterian Church crafts mats from plastic bags for Solutions Center.”](#) *USA Today*, 2018.

[“How to Chant the Psalms.”](#) Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[“Intergenerational Faith Formation Resources.”](#) Lifelong Faith.

[Labyrinth Patterns.](#)

[Pray As You Go.](#) Jesuits in Britain.

[Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association.](#)

[“Reimagining the Examen App.”](#) Ignatian Spirituality. Loyola Press.

[“Sleeping Mats Made from Plastic Bags.”](#) Lutheran Church Charities.

[StoryCorps.](#)

[“Storytelling.”](#) Penn State Intergenerational Program. The Pennsylvania State University.

[“Guided Meditations.”](#) by Dr. Dzung Vo. *Mindfulness for Teens: Discovering Your Inner Strength.*

[“World Kindness Day.”](#) Random Acts of Kindness Foundation.