

Camp Sunday Resources 2026

In the Wilderness

This year the Camp Curriculum theme, ***“In the Wilderness”***, explores stories and activities centered on the assurance that God is with us in any wilderness in which we find ourselves. Not only is God with us there, but some pretty cool things can be discovered in the wilderness.

Here’s an overview of the 2026 camp curriculum resource:

Wilderness is a time or place where we encounter what is new, strange, scary, lonely, unknown or mysterious. The wilderness is a wild and beautiful time and place where we can discover the sacred within each person and all creation. The wilderness can inspire us and guide us, assuring us of God’s constant presence. As the Spirit guides us through the wilderness, we find what we need to face our fears and the very real challenges that impact our world. The wilderness teaches us the importance of community and the ways we navigate challenges together. The wilderness reveals our strengths, growing edges, and potential as God equips us for the unknown still to come. The wilderness awaits us all, and God meets us there. (In the Wilderness, 8)

As you prepare for your Camp Sunday, here are some resources that may be helpful. As a bonus, the wilderness is a great place to explore during Lent, and a Camp Sunday could be a great respite! After all, Jesus goes into the wilderness the first week of Lent! If Lent doesn’t work for your Camp Sunday, these resources can be integrated into any worship service.

None of these focus scriptures are in the Revised Common Lectionary for Lent in Year A. They

Do you already have Lent mapped out? You can still work Camp Sunday in! Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 29 fit into just about any worship service. Some of the popular Lenten sermon guides also have strong linking possibilities.

are also not directly linked to the “Tell Me Something Good” series from A Sanctified Art, though the 2nd and 4th Sunday themes connect with the emphasis on God’s love for all people and community found at camp. Illustrated Ministry’s “The Work of Imagination” uses the Jeremiah passage in week 1, “Rooted Resistance.”

Scripture passages that will be highlighted at camp include:

- **Psalm 139: 7-14** God is everywhere we go
- **Job 12:7-10** God’s Wisdom is found in creation
- **Exodus 13:17-22** The Pillars of Cloud and Fire in the wilderness
- **Matthew 14:22-30** Jesus walks on water
- **Esther 4:12-17** Esther may be here “for such a time as this.”
- **Luke 10:25-37** Parable of the Good Samaritan
- **Jeremiah 29:11-14** Plans for a future with hope

Worship Service Outline

Litany (Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 300)

You will need three readers/speakers for this litany.

Voice 1: What are the first four letters of the word “wilderness”?

Voice 2: W – I – L – D

Voice 1: And what does that spell?

Voice 3: WILD!

Voice 1: Wild is the beginning of wilderness. What does that tell us?

Voice 2: That wilderness might be scary, or dangerous, or unknown –

Voice 3: Full of sounds and sights we don’t know.... yet! Maybe wilderness is just new or different – a place we haven’t discovered.

Voice 2: And maybe wilderness is about exploring and investigating.

Voice 1: I think that’s right: wilderness changes as we discover it, and we change as we discover the wilderness.

Voice 2: As we enter the season of Lent, we choose to enter a time of wandering in the wilderness.

Voice 3: And God is with us.

Call to Worship (Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 316)

One: Imagine worship like wilderness—a place we choose to go, to explore, to be changed.

In worship, we gather together from places near and far.

Many: God, be with us in the wilderness.

One: In the wilderness, we wonder what comes next.

Many: God, be with us in the wilderness.

One: In the wilderness, questions are welcome, as together we learn more about ourselves, each other, and what it means to be people of faith.

Many: God, be with us in the wilderness.

Call to Worship (Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 323)

One: Jesus went into the wilderness to connect with God.

All: We come to this time of worship to do the same.

One: Jesus invited Peter to join him in that wilderness.

All: We come to this time of worship to do the same.

One: Even when the wind blows and waves crash around us,

All: Let us worship God!

Opening Prayer

Holy One,

You nudged us today to show up in worship. We come with hearts that are both heavy with the challenges of life and hearts bursting with gratitude for the places we've seen you at work in our lives. We may be in a time of wilderness wandering. In this time set apart we ask you help us find just what we need to receive today. Help us find community, connection, call, and God's great big love. Help us to discover your Spirit with us. Amen.

Children's Message (also check out Sunday School/Intergenerational activities for inspiration)

Who here has been to sleepaway camp before? What was it like? (You can tell a story about when you have been to camp.) Camp is an amazing place. You get to meet new friends, learn new games and spend time in God's creation. Our Minnesota motto for camp is "Christ, Creation, Community." You can learn about God's love at camp in ways you have never imagined! You can discover all kinds of new plants, insects and see the stars away from the lights of town. You can be brave and try new things with your new friends.

There was a man in the Bible named Job, and you'll learn more about Job at camp this summer. Job was going through a very hard time in his life. He has what we call a "tragic backstory." While Job is in this tough time, he feels like he is in the wilderness. But when Job looks around, he finds teachers everywhere. This is Job 12:7-10.

But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
or talk to earth, and it will teach you;
the fish of the sea will recount it for you.

Among all these, who hasn't known
that the Lord's hand did this?

In whose grasp is the life of every thing,
the breath of every person?

What do you think the birds taught Job? What could the fish teach you? At camp this summer, alongside friends, you will get to enter into the wilderness and find Christ, Creation and Community.

Let's pray. *(This is an echo prayer. . .repeat after me.)*

Dear God,

Thank you for places where we find

Christ

Creation

And Community.

Especially God, we thank you for camp,

And the ways you help us

Discover new things.

We love you God.

Amen.

Sermon outline (based on Acts 2:42-47)

The lectionary reading for Easter 4 (April 26, 2026) is from Acts 2:42-47. This passage explains the life shared together by the early Christian communities. It is remarkably like life at camp! People share what they have and join for meals and worship together. They are constantly in a state of awe over what God is doing. The early church was growing quickly, and people were making new friends each day.

Open with a story of a shared meal—in your home, in your church, in your community.

Meals are places where we build connection.

Acts 2 gives us a glimpse into life in the early church.

It was both a dangerous and joyful time to be a follower of Jesus.

It quickly looked different from the ways of the Roman Empire.

Acts 2 emphasizes the time the people spent in awe and in prayer—overwhelming gratitude.

Could we live an Acts 2 life? What would it look like?

Intentionality in gratitude and being alert for moments of awe.

Openness to new people and ideas.

Care for the vulnerable among us.

But wait-- Acts 2 feels like a utopia!

We know it won't be long before the early church starts to argue about who is welcome, what rules they should follow and who is in charge.

This happy Acts 2:42-47 life can't possibly be sustainable.

Maybe not. But this cannot prevent us from trying to live into it.

We can honor that right now, in Acts 2:42-47, life is pretty good.

Camp can be like that. A really good place to experience living differently in

community with a dedicated way of being.

We can choose to navigate challenges together.

We may not get this Acts 2:42-47 experience every day.

But we can catch glimpses of it, and those glimpses become something we can anchor to, work towards and share with others. At camp, in our homes and in our community. Day by day. Amen.

Invitation to Communion (Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, page 304)

Everyone is welcome at God's table. It is a place of awe, gratitude, reconciliation and connection. One of the reasons we gather around God's table is to feel close to God. We know God holds us. We believe God embraces our breath. And at this table, God gives us bread and juice. Yes, to eat and drink, but also to remind us that God pays attention to what we need. God loves us. God holds us. God embraces us. God feeds us. God loves us

Time of Confession and Assurance (adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 325)

One: We choose, in this moment, to open our eyes to the parts of our lives that are not as loving as they could be. (pause)

All: We were born for such a time as this.

One: We choose, in this moment, to imagine a world where all people feel safe and supported.

All: We were born for such a time as this.

One: We choose, in this moment, to recognize that we can make a difference, especially when we work together.

All: We were born for such a time as this.

One: We choose, in this moment, to trust that in all that we say and do, our lives may be a reflection of God's love.

All: We were born for such a time as this.

Invitation to Offering (Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 314)

The ways we care for our neighbors can help build a beloved community where everyone can experience God's love. Hold up your five fingers and think of one thing you can do to help someone else for each finger. As you think of each one, lower that finger until you are making a fist. When you financially support our church, you help all our ministries thrive. (lower finger) When you volunteer at your local school, you build community. (lower finger) When you read the news with prayer on your lips, you breathe a different world into being. (lower finger) When you

help drive kids to camp, you give the opportunity of Christ, creation and community to others.
(lower finger) When you share your snack with a friend, you share what you have. (lower finger)
Turn to someone near you and give them a fist bump as part of your offering this week.

Benediction (adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 202)

*Say: When I say “**AND**”, you say, “God sticks with us.”*

*Wilderness is, **AND** (God sticks with us).*

*Wilderness is unknown, even scary, **AND** (God sticks with us).*

*Wilderness is new, different, **AND** (God sticks with us).*

*Wilderness is waiting to be explored, **AND** (God sticks with us).*

*Wilderness changes us. We change the wilderness, **AND** (God sticks with us).*

***AND** (God sticks with us) wherever we go.*

We cannot fly away from God.

We cannot escape God’s Spirit.

***AND** (God sticks with us.)*

This season we will be brave together.

Brave in the wilderness

Brave in community.

Brave in ourselves.

*Because wilderness is, **AND** (God sticks with us).*

Music Suggestions

Lent/Wilderness

In the Garden (UMH 314)

Lord Who Throughout these 40 Days (UMH 269)

My Lighthouse (Rend Collective)

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (UMH 521)

How Can I Keep from Singing (FWS 2122)

Songs we sing at camp

Sanctuary (FWS 2164)

This Little Light of Mine (traditional)

Pass it On (UMH 572)

Lean on Me (Bill Withers)

All God’s Critters got a Place in the Choir (Traditional)

God of Wonders (Third Day)

Sunday School and Intergenerational Activities

Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 377

Have everyone draw a map of your neighborhood, home, or church. Let people compare their work and see what things they included or left out. Ask everyone which places feel safest, strangest, or most frightening. Talk about how God might be found in each place on the maps.

Adapted from *In the Wilderness*, 379

For each of the following prompts, ask your group, “Where would you go for guidance or to get directions?” This could be a person, publication, website, etc.

Lost in the woods

Deciding what to have for dinner

Putting together a toy or furniture

Completing a level in a game

Repairing a relationship

Fitting in at school or work

Afterward, think about what role God might play in each situation. Think about it from your personal perspective and then reflect on how someone from a different culture or faith tradition might see God in each prompt.

Reading Suggestions

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

This classic children’s book features Max, who has been sent to bed without supper. He imagines a world of wild things. As he gets to know the wild things his curiosity and desire for connection lead him to grow comfortable in the wilderness. This story could be linked with a message about how curiosity can help us when we are scared of something or how when we are lonely, we discover we are not alone. As people who believe in God’s great big love, we know we are never alone. When have you been scared? How have you experienced God with you?

Speak Up, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell (you can watch a read aloud at

<https://youtu.be/FLJlkwZUToo?si=MLyGIMbAAppy7spw>)

This book is about someone who tries to do the right thing. Molly Lou tries to befriend kids who are difficult and lives into the consequences of her choices. She sticks up for kids who are being bullied. This could be linked with a message about how we can care for others in the playground, the

classroom and neighborhood. As people who believe in God's great big love, we are called to care for other people. When have you stood up for a friend? What happened after?

Harold and the Purple Crayon, Crockett Johnson

This classic children's book is about a boy who explores a world while imagining it into being with his purple crayon. Eventually Harold gets lost but finds his way home. This story could be paired with a message about the power of our imagination. The prophets, Mary (Jesus' mother) and the disciples all imagine a better world—the kingdom of God. What do you imagine for our world? What does God imagine for our world? How are you part of creating God's world?