

Camp Sunday Worship: Longing to Be Together

Esther 4

Hints for in-person worship:

- Greeters and Ushers should be people who have been campers and/or have passion for camping ministry when possible.
- Wear camp shirts/themes attire
- Decorate worship space with camp imagery: sleeping bags, flashlights, life jackets, tents, canoe, campfire...

Hints for at home/Virtual Worship:

- Snuggle down in your sleeping blankets in front of the TV or computer
- Have a family “campout in your living room” the night before virtual Camp Sunday
- Prepare Camp breakfast foods and eat together while watching online church. Use you camping dishes!
- Make a cross from twigs, leaves.. nature
- Make s’mores in your fireplace - or bags of S’more mix (golden graham cereal, mini marshmallows, chocolate chips)

Welcome: (You may want to make your welcome like a welcome to camp with intentional “mixer” questions for the people to get to know their “new friends.”)

Gathering Music: (see “Song Ideas” Page 4)

Call to Worship: (Responsive)

Leader: When times of difficulty are before us

Congregation: We are stronger together.

Leader: When we see our world divided in thought and purpose

Congregation: We are stronger together.

Leader: When we mourn broken relationships

Congregation: We are stronger together.

Leader: When we celebrate good times in life

Congregation: We are stronger together

Leader: In song and in prayer

Congregation: We are stronger together

Leader: We have gathered together to worship and praise God so that we might draw strength from each other and from the One who gathers us together.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

Music: (see “Song Ideas” Page 4)

Opening Prayer:

Amazing God, we come to worship today with hearts longing to together. Thank you for all the ways that we can be together to worship. We have voices to pray alone, but we are stronger together. In this worship help us realize that we are not alone. Thank for all the ways you have taught us to pray and to be in relationship to you. We are also thankful for other beautiful places where we can connect to Christ, Creation, and Community, like camp. May we always feel that we are together with you no matter where or how we worship and pray. Amen.

Time Mostly for the Children:

*Invite the children present in worship to come forward. Make sure the word **together** is used.*

Show this short (4 min) YouTube cartoon narration with animation summary of the Esther story.

[The Purim Story in 4 minutes: Go Esther!](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYGgOMe-DqQ) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYGgOMe-DqQ> Be sure to “unpack” the story and focus on how Esther, even though she was apart from her Jewish friends and family, they were **together** and supporting one another.

OR

Read *I’m New Here*, by Anne Sibley O’Brien (Charlesbridge, 2015). Describes the experiences of three immigrant children in a new school. Would be a great resource to use to explain how to include others in community.

Gather the children for a short prayer:

Dear God,

Help us to remember that you call us to be with others, together in this world you created. Help us to find common bonds with each other so that we can grow into a true community of faith that loves you and bravely serves others. Amen.

Music: (see “Song Ideas” Page 4)

Scripture/Sermon Ideas: From This Is Our Prayer Curriculum Copyright © 2019 by Chalice Press

The curriculum for 2021, *This Is Our Prayer*, has many stories about how people in the Bible came to be in relationship with God through various prayerful acts that can be used for sermon ideas. The sermon should try to make the connection between the scriptural story and act of prayer and how we in the current time can pray in that same way to deepen our relationship with God. The speaker can relate the scripture story experiences at camp that lead to connections with Christ, Creation, and Community.

- Longing Together; Community: God acting through us
 - Esther 4 ~ Esther and her people
 - Prayer Practice: Power of praying together (community prayer)

Esther 4

Esther’s story is long and a beautiful narrative. The focus is on chapter 4, but the entire story is worth attention. Chapter 4 puts us at the key decision moment, where the young queen is confronted with the threat facing the Jewish community. What comes before helps us understand what is at risk for Esther and the power Haman holds as the villain of the story. What comes after shows Esther’s courage and the ironic turn of events for Haman, and it introduces us to Purim, which is still celebrated today. This is a story where context matters, so be sure to explore the full narrative as best suits your congregation.

While Esther is the title character, the focus is on the whole community. Together, the community faces adversity and cries out in prayer. Each person plays a different role, but the longing of the full family of faith has power. Community members encourage one another and support one another. For Esther, the

bond with her people was deep. It was a bond that included a shared faith, a generational story of overcoming adversity, and a culture that connected them even if they had never met. To be Jewish, for Esther, was to be never truly alone. This is the gift of community and the power of longing together.

One of the best teachers we have at camp is the community. We eat together, play together, and worship together. We learn about one another and about getting along with others as we share cabins, bathrooms, and other personal spaces. As we get to know one another, we begin to care about the places they are from and the people they care about. As we get to know one another, we find common causes and concerns. We fall into a rhythm of life together, and when camp ends, we lament the close of our time together. While we hope no one has to take a stand for the protection of all campers, we come to understand the power of community and the way it shapes our choices. Living together, we come to understand the connection Esther had with others and how we can share the longings of a community.

Offering: *We recommend speaking to how healthy and faithful congregations support camping ministry in many ways already. Apportionments, sending campers, supplying paid and volunteer staff, encouraging your pastor to volunteer and to go and find respite at our sites, holding meetings and retreats at our sites, etc. Remind them to give faithfully to such a great church first. It is also appropriate to invite a special offering to build a local camp scholarship fund, support a camp site's programming budget, support conference camp scholarships, support a special project at a site, or sponsor a staff person by paying all or part of their compensation. Camping is an extension of your ministry and all kinds of support are helpful and appreciated.*

One successful method of collecting a special offering for supporting the ministries of camp is a "noisy bucket" offering. Use metal/glass containers and ask campers to collect change (money that makes noise!) as a way to support camping programs or local church camp scholarships.

Offering Prayer:

Creator God, We recognize that we are truly blessed to live in your wondrous Creation, to have family, friends and neighbors as our Community that we can depend upon. And we have been blessed by the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. As you have blessed us we, in turn, share a portion of that blessing with others, our time, talent, and tithes, in support of the work of your church and our camping ministries. Accept these gifts given with grateful hearts to further the growth of your Kingdom in this community, at our camp locations, and beyond. We share what we have so that the warmth and light of your love will spread to all people everywhere. Amen.

Music: (see "Song Ideas" Page 4)

Challenge and Blessing: *(It is powerful and helpful to tie this back into the same theme as the sermon so adapt this in whatever ways makes that work)*

Today we honor God and give God thanks for the community we share here in our church and at camp, the faith we have, and the relationship we have with God through prayer. May we always remember to call upon the name of God at all times.

May God, who calls us together, be our guide this week to faithfully pray as one voice and explore all that we can do together to bring light to the darkness.

Go with God and know God's peace *(end the blessing here with AMEN! Or if your congregation's tradition is to have a responsive benediction and one used at camp often, continue with...)*

For God is Good! *(leader)*

All the Time

All the Time, (*leader*)

Good Is Good!

AMEN (*all*)

Song Ideas:

Inside Out, the publisher of the 2021 Curriculum being used at our Dakotas-Minnesota Area Camp & Retreat Ministries sites, has created play lists on Spotify to accompany each day's prayer themes. This is a great resource for Camp Sunday music.

1. Log in/register (for free) for Spotify (www.spotify.com)
2. Search for *This is Our Prayer*.
3. Scroll down to *Playlists* and you will see seven different play lists with contemporary Christian and secular music to play before, during, or after worship. You can use these lists for ideas for songs for your worship team to lead during worship.
4. Favorite the playlists to store them in your library for easy access

Some of the favorite camp songs included in the Spotify play lists:

- Come As You Are (Crowder)
- Rescuer: Good News (Rend Collective)
- A Place at the Table (Lori True)
- If We Are the Body (Casting Crowns)
- Let Us Break Bread Together (Discovery Singers)
- Beautiful Things (Gungor)
- Oceans (Rend Collective)
- Lord, I Need You (Matt Maher)
- My Lighthouse (Rend Collective)
- 10,000 Reasons (Rend Collective)
- Build Your Kingdom Here (Rend Collective)
- This is Amazing Grace (Phil Wickman)
- Blessed Be Your Name (Matt Redman)
- Days of Elijah (Twila Paris)

Song Suggestion from The United Methodist Hymnal & Faith We Sing:

United Methodist Hymnal

- #64 Holy, Holy, Holy
- #92 For the Beauty
- #128 He Leadeth Me
- #154 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
- #177 He Is Lord
- #204 Emmanuel, Emmanuel
- #347 Spirit Song
- #357 Just As I Am
- #393 Spirit of the Living God
- #399 Take My Life
- #400 Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
- #405 Seek Ye First
- #451 Be Thou My Vision
- #473 Lead Me, Lord
- #500 Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart
- #572 Pass It On
- #593 Here I Am, Lord
- #600 Wonderful Words of Life
- #601 Thy Word
- #657 This is the Day

The Faith We Sing

- #2002 I Will Call Upon the Lord
- #2003 Praise You
- #2016 Glorify Thy Name
- #2018 Honor and Praise
- #2025 As the Deer
- #2040 Awesome God
- #2068 I Love You, Lord
- #2071 Jesus, Name Above All Names
- #2128 Come and Find the Quiet Center
- #2129 I Have Decided
- #2152 Change My Heart, O God
- #2162 Grace Alone
- #2165 Cry of My Heart
- #2172 We Are Called
- #2222 The Servant Song
- #2223 They'll Know We are Christians
- #2226 Bind Us Together
- #2235 We Are Singing
- #2239 Go Ye

Special thanks to Rev. Clay Lundberg for helping to create this list of song suggestions.