



Staff Training Manual

Camp St. George
3776 Alpha Avenue
Strawberry Point, IA 52076
Website: www.CampStGeorge.org

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Camp St. George

3650 Cottage Grove Ave. SE

Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

V. Rev. Fred Shaheen, Camp Director

319-651-6452

Shaheenf@hotmail.com

Dear Staff Members of Camp St. George:

Christ is in our midst!

Thank you for giving generously of your time and talents to the ministry of Camp St. George. We know how important Orthodox camping programs are for the building up of the young people of our Church and it is a great blessing to be entrusted with their formation in the Christian spiritual life.

In the pages that follow you will find important information about Staff Training and Camp. We take the spiritual and physical health of every child as our first priority, therefore, it is important that you read each section carefully. First I encourage you to read "A Letter to My Child's Staff Person" on page 33. This letter will especially show you what a privilege it is to care for each and every child at camp. I cannot emphasize enough how vital your personal and prayerful preparations are in our common ministry of camp.

As it is said, "love is the only gift that increases the more you give it away." As with all good works in the love of Christ, we ourselves will be the recipients of greater love, greater joy and an abundance of blessings!

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me by telephone or by email. Otherwise, I will be ready and waiting to greet you with joy and enthusiasm this June!

Your servant in Christ,

*Fr. Fred Shaheen
Camp Director*

Every Orthodox child should have an Orthodox camp experience.

Our Patron Saint

We pray to saints to intercede on our behalf. St. George is our patron saint and you should be familiar with the story of his life and be able to share it with your campers.

The Holy and Great Martyr George

April 23

This renowned and glorious martyr was born in Cappadocia, the son of rich and God-fearing parents. His father suffered for Christ, after which his mother moved to Palestine. When George grew up, he went into the army, in which he rose, by the age of twenty, to the rank of tribune, and as such was in service under the Emperor Diocletian. When this Emperor began a terrible persecution of Christians, George came before him and boldly confessed that he was a Christian. The Emperor threw him into prison, and commanded that his feet be put in the stocks and a heavy weight placed on his chest. After that, he commanded that he be bound on a wheel, under which was a board with great nails protruding, and thus be turned. He then had him buried in a pit with only his head above the ground, and left there for three days and nights. Then, through some magician, he gave him deadly poison, but in the face of all these tortures, George prayed unceasingly to God, and God healed him instantly and saved him from death, to the great amazement of the people. When he also raised a dead man to life by his prayers, many embraced the Christian faith. Among these were the Emperor's wife, Alexandra, and the chief pagan priest, Athanasius, the governor Glycerius and Valerius, Donatus and Therinus. Finally, the Emperor commanded that George and the Empress Alexandra be beheaded. Blessed Alexandra died on the scaffold before being killed, and St. George was beheaded. This happened in the year 303. The miracles that have been performed at his grave are without number. Also are his appearances in dreams to those who, thinking on him, have sought his help, from that time up to the present day. Consumed by love for Christ, it was not difficult for holy George to leave all for this love – his status, wealth and imperial favor, his friends and the whole world. For this love, the Lord rewarded him with a wreath of unfading glory in heaven and on earth, and with eternal life in His kingdom. The Lord further endowed him with the power to help in need and distress all who honor him and call on his name.

Staff Training Location & Information

Staff Training will be held at **Camp Ewalu** in Strawberry Point, IA. The address is **37776 Alpha Avenue, Strawberry Point, IA 52076**.

Staff Training will officially begin on Friday at 4:00pm. We will be ready to greet you at 3:00pm. If you plan to arrive any earlier, if you will be late, or if you will be flying in to the Cedar Rapids airport, please contact Fr. Fred in advance. *Staff Training is short, so please be on time!*

Please come prepared, having read through your Staff Manual. We will be reviewing the information found in the manual and covering a lot of additional information, but the most important aspect of Staff Training is *community building*. We believe Staff Training should be like a retreat. As we prepare to serve we will be learning together, getting to know one another, praying together and realizing that we truly are *family* in Christ. We pray that Staff Training is not simply informative but is truly an edifying experience for each and every person! *If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email Fr. Fred.*

V. Rev. Fr. Fred Shaheen
cell# (319) 651-6452
St. George Church office# (319) 363-1559
email: Shaheenf@hotmail.com

Camp Ewalu Information

Ewalu Camp & Retreat Center
37776 Alpha Avenue
Strawberry Point, IA 52065
Phone # (563) 933-4700
community@ewalu.org

Staff Packing List

Bring...

- This Manual!
- Bible (extras if you have them), Items to set up cabin altar or prayer corner (icons, prayer book, etc.)
- Clothing for at least 9 days of training and camp (there are no laundry facilities at camp)
- Nice outfit for Divine Liturgy (there will be two Divine Liturgies – Sunday & during the week)
- Long pants for daily church services and Evening Program (mosquitoes!) (women may wear capris or skirts below the knees instead of jeans for services)
- 2 pairs of closed-toed shoes** (tennis shoes/athletic shoes) – one pair may get wet. **NO OPEN-TOED SHOES ARE ALLOWED ON THE TRAILS – ONLY IN THE SHOWER AND AT THE POOL.**
- Water shoes for creek stomp (optional)
- Modest swimsuit (no two-piece suits), pool towel
- Sweater, sweatshirt, or lightweight jacket
- Waterproof rain coat or poncho
- Shower Shoes/Flip-Flops
- Sleeping bag, pillow with case OR sheets, blanket(s) and pillow with case
- Pajamas/sleepwear
- Laundry bag
- Flashlight
- Alarm Clock
- Wristwatch
- 2 bath towels, washcloth
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.)
- Sunscreen, non-aerosol insect repellent, lip balm
- Water bottle
- Backpack for Afternoon Program (to carry sunscreen, water bottle, pool towel, etc.)
- Optional: Camera, journal, fan
- All medications in their original containers
- Books, games, cards, crafts or activities for cabin time – see “Ideas for Cabin Time” section

Leave Home...

- Electronic games
- Food, including gum
- Jewelry, expensive clothing and any other valuable items
- All tobacco products
- Alcohol
- Immodest apparel
- Dangerous implements (i.e. knives, axes, fireworks, etc.)
- Illegal substances
- Pets
- Any aerosol products** (hairspray, deodorant, insect repellent, etc.)

*Camp St. George and Camp
Ewalu are not responsible for any
lost, damaged, or stolen items.*

Our Mission Statement:

The mission of Camp St. George is to present to young people a living experience of the Holy Orthodox Faith, in their relationship with God and other campers in an uncluttered, natural environment. To accomplish this we will seek to bring young people to:

- Awareness of self and fellow men
- A broadening of their Orthodox life
- A greater awareness of their religion
- Good sportsmanship
- Growth in personal relationships and personal responsibility
- An appreciation of nature and a concern for the environment.

The Good Counselor

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

—John 10:14-18

The Golden Rule of Camp

EXPECT THE CAMPERS TO DO ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING WE DO!

(This includes the way we act, our attitude, and our time management skills.)

Sermons We See

By Edgar A. Guest

*I'd rather see a sermon
than hear one any day,
I'd rather one should walk with me
than merely show me the way.
The eye's a better pupil
and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing,
but example's always clear;
And the best of all the preachers
are the men who live their creeds,
For to see the good in action
is what everybody needs.*

*I can soon learn how to do it,
if you'll let me see it done.
I can watch your hands in action,
but your tongue too fast may run.
And the lectures you deliver
may be very wise and true;
But I'd rather get my lesson
by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you
and the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding
how you act and how you live.*

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Camp Director

- Oversee all aspects of Camp St. George
- Recruit, train and supervise all staff in the responsibilities of their positions
- Process staff/counselor applications
- Coordinate Background Checks
- Conduct regular observations to provide support to staff and ensure that acceptable job performance criteria are continually practiced
- Provide feedback on staff performance

Assistant Director

- Recruit, train and supervise all staff in the responsibilities of their positions
- Conduct regular observations to provide support to staff and ensure that acceptable job performance criteria are continually practiced
- Provide feedback on staff performance

Head of Girls Camp/Head of Boys Camp

- Be a sounding board for counselors
- Lend a sympathetic ear
- Be a positive/supportive role model in all areas
- Help communication between counselors

Health Director

- Prior to camp, work with the Camp St. George affiliated licensed medical doctor or registered nurse, who is currently licensed in Iowa, to review and update the Health Manual and to prepare for the medical needs of the camp
- Prior to camp, work with the Camp Director and Camp Ewalu staff to prepare for the medical needs of the camp
- Prior to camp, organize camper medical forms & familiarize yourself with individual camper's medical needs
- Work with counselors regarding the medical/emotional needs of campers
- Handle daily distribution of medications
- Be available and able to handle medical emergencies around the clock during the entire session of camp
- Keep a daily log of all medical needs of staff and campers
- Be in contact with the Camp St. George affiliated doctor or registered nurse who is prepared for any necessary phone consultations and visits to camp

Program Director

- Provide assistance and support to the other Program Directors
- Oversee the development and execution of camp activities
- Establish goals and outcomes of the activity programs
- Provide support to staff

Morning Program Director

- Prior to camp, work with Camp Director and Camp Ewalu staff to plan the Morning Program activities
- Prepare and bring to camp all necessary materials and equipment for Morning Program activities
- Supervise counselors in execution of Morning Program
- Prepare alternate activities in case of rain

Afternoon Program Director

- Prior to camp, work with Camp Director and Camp Ewalu staff to plan the Afternoon Program activities
- Prepare and bring to camp all necessary materials and equipment for Afternoon Program activities
- Supervise counselors in execution of Afternoon Program
- Prepare alternate activities in case of rain

Evening Program Director

- Prior to camp, work with Camp Director and Camp Ewalu staff to plan the Evening Program activities
- Prepare and bring to camp all necessary materials and equipment for Evening Program activities
- Supervise counselors in execution of Evening Program
- Prepare alternate activities in case of rain

Counselor (age 18 or older)

- Be prepared to take on the role of “Dad” or “Mom” to a particular small group of campers, with care and concern for *all* campers of Camp St. George
- Together with a co-counselor, live with and provide for the needs of a cabin of up to twelve campers
- Cooperate fully with all camp rules and the program of Camp St. George
- Work in close proximity with others and be able to take direction at all times

Registrar

- Process camper applications
- Maintain financial records including payments and scholarships
- Forward Health forms received to Health Director
- Create a spreadsheet for cabin assignments
- Coordinate check-in of campers on first day of camp

Treasurer

- Deposit funds received
- Pay required expenses
- Prepare final financial statement

Staff Training Coordinator

- Develop Staff Training agenda, materials, handouts and activities
- Coordinate presenters for the Staff Training
- Coordinate preparation for Staff training as identified on the Staff Training Task List

General Staff Information

Personal Valuables

It is advisable not to bring personal sports equipment, expensive jewelry or any valuable possessions to Camp. Both Camp St. George and Camp Ewalu accept no responsibility for any items brought and somehow lost or stolen. If any personal items such as archery equipment, bats, hockey sticks, or other equipment that may be a safety hazard to others are brought to camp, they will be stored in the camp office for the protection of all.

Personal Vehicles

All vehicles must be parked in the designated parking lot at the camp. *Personal vehicles should never be used to transport campers.*

Phone Calls (Staff)

No personal phone calls are to be made on camp telephones in the Camp Office or in the Infirmary.

- ❖ When personal calls are received on the camp line, a message will be taken and delivered with the mail (emergency calls will be delivered immediately).
- ❖ You may bring your cell phones; however, they should remain OFF (you may be reached through the Camp Office in case of emergency). You are only permitted to make calls on your cell phone in cases of emergency or if you have been given permission for time off, in which case you should use them privately, away from the cabin and away from the campers.

Staff Dress

All staff should model Christian modesty in their choice of everyday attire. Revealing or tight clothing is unacceptable. In addition, staff should not have any tattoos that would be visible when wearing shorts, a T-shirt, socks & shoes. Male staff members should not wear any earrings or other body piercings. Female staff members should have no more than two earrings in each ear and no other body piercings.

Dress Code (same as Camper Dress Code):

Inappropriate clothing includes but is not limited to: skirts and dresses which do not cover the knees, short shorts, strapless or spaghetti strap tops, midriff tops, low-rise pants, two-piece bathing suits (swimsuits should be carefully chosen). Clothing should not be excessively revealing (i.e. open backs, open shoulders, low-cut or high-cut tops) and should not be skintight. Although dress for daily church services is casual, it should be noted that *shorts and sleeveless tops are inappropriate*. For the Divine Liturgy, men are expected to wear long pants and a special shirt and women should wear a dress or skirt and blouse.

Laundry

There are no laundry facilities available at camp. Please pack enough clothing for Staff Training and the entire week of camp (keep in mind that you will get sweaty in the afternoon). Bring a laundry bag for your dirty clothes.

Staff Health

During the camping season, staff must take special care to remain healthy in the face of long hours, exposure to variable weather, and living in close quarters with coughing, sneezing and fungus-carrying campers. This will require good hygiene habits, good eating habits and sufficient sleep. Staff members with illnesses that inhibit their work may be removed from their duties by the Camp Director and sent to the infirmary. Because this situation will inevitably cause stress to the other staff members and to the campers it is very important to do everything possible to stay healthy!

Time off

Counselors will be given free time several times throughout the week. If a staff member needs more time, permission must be given by the Camp Director.

Staff members are not permitted to leave the camp unless the Camp Director has given special permission. If you are given this permission and there is a problem or an emergency please contact the Camp Director's cell phone.

Prohibited Activities

Sexual Misconduct

The safety of each and every camper, and the reputation of Camp St. George as a whole, rests with the staff collectively and with each member of the staff individually. One's position on the staff of

Camp St. George changes one's relationships with others simply because of the status and authority that go with the position. These issues of power may or may not be consciously perceived by either party in a relationship. Regarding staff/camper interactions, these issues play an even larger role, again often without the conscious perception of either person, with the added issues of legality.

Because of this, there are certain behaviors which must be enumerated, and in which no staff member during the duration of their week at Camp St. George should be involved. They include: engaging in physical touching of any kind, including but not limited to; kissing, petting, caressing, or any other physical contact intended for sexual gratification with any other person related in any way to the camp, including but not limited to; campers, staff and employees of Camp Ewalu. Also, engaging in vulgar, obscene, suggestive, or profane talk or behavior is strictly forbidden.

There are additional behaviors, which, while not intended for sexual gratification are nonetheless inappropriate due to the above-mentioned issues of propriety. They include: massages, sitting on laps, and lingering full body hugs.

ALL staff members must sign and return the Sexual Misconduct Policies form prior to the start of camp.

Alcohol

Alcohol use may be legal for some staff members, but to protect the reputation of Camp St. George, alcohol is strictly prohibited. Staff members are not to possess, consume or distribute alcoholic beverages at any time. In addition, possessing, using or distributing any illegal substance is strictly forbidden.

Tobacco Use

Camp Ewalu is a non-smoking facility. There is no smoking allowed anywhere on the grounds.

In addition to the above specified behaviors, conduct that is in any manner inconsistent with the operation of an Orthodox Christian summer camp and the moral teachings of the Orthodox Christian Church is strictly prohibited.

Camp St. George Rules

1. All Staff, Counselors and Campers will respect one another with Christian respect at all times. Fighting, inappropriate touching, put-downs or other behavior that is harmful or hurtful to others is unacceptable.
2. Campers are to stay with their assigned counselors at all times and remain at their scheduled events.
3. No food of any kind is permitted in the cabins. All food brought to or received while at camp will be distributed at meal or snack times and shared with others.
4. There are to be no girls in boy's units or boys in girl's units (excepting the possibility of a pre-arranged cabin time sponsored by the counselors with the Camp Director's approval)
5. All property must be respected - No graffiti, destructive behavior or theft!
6. Campers are not to tamper with heating, water or electrical controls, supplies or property of any kind belonging to Camp Ewalu. Do not remove pillows, blankets, mattresses, cleaning supplies, etc. from the cabins.
7. Excessive "rough housing" or "horse-play" is not allowed in the cabins (such as jumping on or from bed to bed, etc.).
8. The swimming pool will be open at specified times only. No one is allowed in the pool area except during those specified hours.
9. Chewing gum is not allowed on camp grounds.
10. The following are forbidden on camp grounds: alcohol, drugs, tobacco and any flammable substances (including aerosol spray cans). Possession of any such item may result in immediate dismissal.
11. During the Afternoon Program/Free Period campers must stay within the designated areas - do not stray!
12. Modest apparel is required at all times - clothing that is revealing or too tight is unacceptable. There will be no shorts or sleeveless tops (male or female) in Church. If anyone is dressed inappropriately at any time he/she will be asked to change immediately. Shoes/sandals are to be worn at all times on camp grounds!

Daily Tasks

Morning

Rise and Shine! Start the day positive, with warmth and enthusiasm, thanking God for the opportunity to serve Him. The wake-up bell will ring at 7:00 a.m. Please no radio alarm clocks. It is best to be up at least by the time your first camper is. The best way to get cooperation is to model good behavior. When the counselor is diligent in getting ready and doing chores and is a kind and loving role model, the campers will follow. Waking up to a yelling counselor is the last thing that will help. Be sure to leave enough time for everyone to wake up, shower (if necessary), get dressed, clean the cabin, and be at Matins on time. Cabin inspections will be done during Morning Program, so be sure your cabins are CLEAN! Counselors will have free time during the Morning Program.

Cabin Cleanup

Cleaning duties should be divided fairly among the campers for the daily cabin cleanup to be done prior to Matins each day. Use discretion in delegating age-appropriate chores (younger campers should not be handling bleach, etc.). Duties include:

- ❖ Floors swept (mopped when needed)
- ❖ Showers, sinks and toilets cleaned
- ❖ Bunks made neatly
- ❖ Luggage & Toiletries put away neatly by each campers bunk
- ❖ Dirty clothes in laundry bag
- ❖ Waste paper baskets emptied into designated containers
- ❖ Swim suits and towels hung neatly on clothesline outside
- ❖ Faucets completely turned off
- ❖ Lights out

Helpful Hints:

- ❖ On the first night of camp, counselors will help campers prepare the cabin chore chart for the rotation of duties.
- ❖ Traditionally cabin inspections are done each day during Morning Program with “awards” given at lunch for the cleanest and dirtiest cabins (Warning: the “award” for the dirtiest cabin comes with added duties!)

Afternoon

The late morning Cabin Time provides a short time to get ready for afternoon activities. Make sure your campers have everything they will need for their activities (socks and sneakers for field activities, water bottles, SUNSCREEN, etc). The pool will be open during the Free Period every afternoon; anyone who plans to swim must wear their bathing suit under their clothes and bring their towel to all afternoon activities! No one will be allowed to go back to their cabin to change or get their towel! Remind all campers at lunch where they will be going in the afternoon. The late afternoon Cabin Time will provide a longer period of time to rest, shower and prepare for the evening.

Each counselor will be responsible for specific afternoon activities each day. It is important to be a strong leader during these activities and to be helpful, motivational and cooperative with the Camp Ewalu staff.

Evening

Evening program is always a high point in the day at camp. It is a time of fun and fellowship. Use the time to engage with your campers and make it the best experience for them. Try to focus your time on your campers by sitting with them rather than with other staff. Counselors should follow through on the plans of the Evening Program Director and help to motivate and encourage the campers. Remind

everyone to dress appropriately (long pants and long-sleeved shirts are best to deter mosquitoes!) and bring mosquito repellent as well as flashlights!

Lights Out

After a long and exciting day, it will be time to unwind and get ready to rest up for our next day. Lights out for younger cabins is 10:30pm; for older cabins is 11:30pm. Just before it is time for lights out, each counselor should lead Evening Prayers with cabin, including the campers as they are able. Prayers are printed for you in this manual and will be provided on your clipboard. You may also add specific prayers that your campers would like to say for family and loved ones. A short but consistent rule of prayer is best. (If you feel your campers are able, this is also a good opportunity to have the Kiss of Peace – it will build closeness and help them to forgive and love one another - a simple hug is fine or you may have them say, “Christ is in our midst!” – “He is and ever shall be!”) Thank God for the day! Praying together is something that will leave an impression on your campers and inspire them to continue Evening Prayers even after they are back home.

After the lights are out, all campers should be in their beds, and the counselor should be in the cabin with them. All counselors are encouraged to read to your campers as they fall asleep (the Psalms are best; you might also read from the lives of the saints, or other spiritual reading *approved by the Camp Director*). (See also *Supervision of Campers* on page 17 and *Prayer* on page 22).

Meals

This is an often-missed time for cabin bonding. Campers should always walk to meals together by cabin. When in the Dining Hall, stay focused on your campers, not on other staff members. Try to mix up the seating at every meal to avoid cliques and to encourage friendship amongst all campers.

Remember, early is on time, and on time is late!

Ideas for Cabin Time

Cabin Time is built into the daily schedule for rest and preparation for upcoming activities, but it also provides opportunities for cabin unity, bonding, discussion and prayer. We encourage counselors to come prepared with some meaningful Cabin Time ideas and any necessary supplies. Listed below are several ideas for Cabin Time. Feel free to use your own ideas or to consult other staff members for more ideas.

***Note: Any Cabin Time activity involving leaving the cabin MUST receive the Camp Director’s approval.**

- Play card games (regular cards, Uno, Go Fish, etc.).
- Starry Night Discussion/Flashlight Walk.
- Read a children’s book with a good moral – have “Story Time” and discuss the moral of the story.
- Color name tags/posters for campers’ bunks.
- Have a “Question & Answer” box in your cabin – pull out 1 or 2 for cabin time discussions.
- Draw names for “Secret Friends” and have campers do something anonymous & kind each day for their “Secret Friend”.
- Make a Cabin Gratitude List: everyone writes something on the list each day for which they are thankful.

- Have a cabin symbol: “We had a funny face that only our cabin did and whenever we were all together we would say ‘cabin symbol!’ and we would all do it”.
- Ask each camper to share something positive they learned that day (from Christian Ed, Church, an experience they had, etc.). This could lead to a discussion.
- Have a cabin prayer list.
- Arrange time and place to meet with a priest for a question and answer session.
- Have each camper write something they like/admire about each of the other campers and have them give their lists to you. Later, write out a special sheet for each camper with all the things the other campers wrote about them. (Good for the end of the week.)
- Share stories of the Lives of the Saints
- Have each camper share about their patron saint. If they don’t know it, try to find the story for them.
- Play Jenga, Buzz, The Crazy Number Game or other quiet, indoor, small group games - there are lots of good books available as well as resources on the web!
- Pass out pieces of paper. Have each camper write about a funny thing that happened to them. Collect the papers and then pick one out at a time. Have the campers try to guess who wrote it.
- Craft activities, Play-Doh, Etc. – with or without a moral teaching! *You could use Play-Doh as an ice-breaker for campers age 13 and up. Have two colors: one is you before camp and the other is during camp. You have the option of becoming a new ball of dough. Mix together.*
- “Two True, One False”: have each camper write down two true statements about themselves and one false statement. Read aloud and have other campers try to guess which is false.
- Pass out different color post-it notes. Each note could represent a person to pray for, a personal goal, the presence of the saints and angels, etc. Discuss and put notes on a wall or the ceiling. You could alternatively use Glow-in-the-Dark stars.
- Have a cabin “theme” for the week and decorate your cabin with available craft supplies. You could make up a “Cabin Song”, “Cabin Symbol”, etc. to go with the theme!
- Do a fun art project – something original and creative.
- Write letters to God.
- What is Love? Cabin time...Love as an action.
- Post an “Ask Abouna” sheet in your cabin and anytime a question comes up that no one knows the answer to, write it on the sheet. This will help you remember to ask a priest for an answer.
- Invite a priest to an “Ask Abouna” session where the campers may ask any type of question.
- Memorize a prayer a little each night that would be fully memorized by the end of the session.
- Write verses of a prayer, Psalm, etc. Give each camper a piece of the prayer or Psalm and have them put the pieces in the proper order. Once finished, say the prayer or read the Psalm.
- Pray for each other out loud, in a circle, before you go to bed. Each person prays for the person to the right or to the left.
- Share the most embarrassing or the scariest moment in your life.
- Tape a piece of paper to everyone’s back with the name of a person (i.e. saint)/place/feast, then have the kids walk around and try to figure out who/what they are by asking yes/no questions. At the end, talk about everyone’s person/place/feast.
- Have a discussion about miracles. It’s a good alternative to ghost stories. You can talk about how faith creates miracles, not vice versa.
- Have a discussion about angels and demons.
- Have a discussion about the importance of living for God at all times and places; especially in the face of social pressures (sex, alcohol, social media, etc.) This would be a good discussion to have near your icon corner.
- Have a discussion around a topic of your choice (love, friendship, creation, truth, etc.)

General Camper/Cabin Information

Cabin Atmosphere

Counselors should strive to make each cabin a “home away from home.” As Orthodox Christians, our homes are seen as “little churches,” thus, our cabins are to be “little churches” as well. While at camp, and especially in the cabins, everyone should have a sense of God’s peace and love and should feel safe and comfortable if we are doing our job of putting God first for our campers. Sadly, not all campers live in peaceful or godly homes. The experience they have at camp may be the only time they feel this love and support. Therefore, the cabin atmosphere should be free of foul language (in *any* language!), put-downs, inappropriate conversation (gossip, talk about sex, etc.) and all distracting or isolating devices (music, video games, magazines,, iPhone, iPads, etc.). Don’t try to be popular with the campers - be what they really need – a loving caregiver. Give the campers the best experience possible, free from worldly distractions. If you make an exception and let “your” cabin listen to music, then other campers will complain to their counselors that they aren’t allowed to listen to music. We must all work together and commit to the standards set for our entire camp.

Contemporary Moral Issues

The intimacy of cabin time may lead campers to discuss or ask questions regarding any number of contemporary moral issues. In truth, most of these are not “contemporary” at all, but are age-old moral issues. The most obvious issues are sex outside of marriage, homosexuality and abortion. All of these types of discussions should be handled with extreme care. Always remember that to each and every child *you* represent the Holy Orthodox Faith! Your opinions are not important – Truth is! It is best to respond to these questions with a simple answer and to let your campers know that the priest is the best person to answer these types of questions (you may want to schedule a time to meet with the priest). With all these issues, we should emphasize that *each of us is created in the image and likeness of God, that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that we should keep our bodies pure and undefiled, with respect for ourselves and others, glorifying God in our bodies.* (This is true also for the more recent “pop-culture” trend of tattoos and body piercings.) The simple answers you should give regarding the above issues are:

- The Church and Holy Scripture teach that sex outside of marriage is morally wrong and sinful.
- The Church and Holy Scripture teach that homosexual acts are morally wrong and sinful.
- The Church and Holy Scripture teach that abortion (the killing of a human life, created in the image and likeness of God) is morally wrong and sinful.

It would be appropriate to have a brief discussion based on “Hate the sin - Love the sinner.” But leave the “meat” of the Church’s teachings and that of Holy Scripture to the priest! Many edifying conversations can be had during cabin time and you are encouraged to facilitate these discussions, but stay focused on basic truths – on the love and mercy of God, on all that God has done in your life, and on discussions that are inspiring! (Refer to “*Sermons We See*” on page 6 and *Ideas for Cabin Time* on pages 13-14).

Idle Talk and Community Life

*O Lord and Master of my life,
Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.
Yea O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother.
For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.*

The prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian is a powerful prayer, set apart by the Church to be prayed specifically during the season of Great and Holy Lent. During your stay at camp you will be living in a very close community. We will live our lives “as fish in a fish bowl.” The campers, staff and everyone

around will always be watching everything we do. Living in this type of atmosphere, it is very easy to talk about other people and things they do or say (campers and staff alike!). Gossip and idle talk hurts others and is sinful before God. Avoid idle talk and let gossip stop when it reaches you. If you are concerned about gossip or a rumor you have heard report it directly to the Camp Director. The Prayer of St. Ephraim can be a great source of help during our unique experience of living in the close community of camp.

Church Etiquette

Just as in all other settings of camp, church is an opportunity for the campers to learn and they will learn by our example. Outlined below are certain guidelines that we should follow and teach while in church.

- ❖ Be reverent and respectful – even a “makeshift” church (at camp or anywhere) is set apart as sacred space and is blessed by the priest. We should always cross ourselves when we enter or leave the church.
- ❖ Talk only if absolutely necessary, and then only in a whisper.
- ❖ Teach your campers that it is okay to sit down quietly for a short time if they get tired (NOT during Communion, the Trisagion, the Gospel reading or any time the priest is outside the altar area). They should make every effort to stand for the majority of the service. It is not appropriate to lean against the wall, cross their arms, put their hands in their pockets, etc. Proper posture encourages proper prayer.
- ❖ Let US pray to the Lord – Liturgy means “the work of the people” – not just the priest! Encourage your campers to sing and participate.
- ❖ If you have younger kids get them service books and help them follow along. If you have older kids, encourage them to help the younger ones (to be “big brothers” and “big sisters”)!
- ❖ Allow your campers enough time to use the restroom before each service (make it a cabin rule if you want to). Campers *will* try to use this as an excuse during church! A camper may really need to visit the restroom during a service, but counselors need to make sure it is not disruptive or habitual! If your camper does not return in a timely manner, you may need to check on him/her.
- ❖ Stay with your campers as you leave the church after each service and direct them to the next activity.
- ❖ Make sure you and your campers are dressed appropriately and modestly for every service (see guidelines). Also, shoes must be worn *at all times* in Church.
- ❖ Observe your campers in church and, if necessary, gently correct or teach them the proper way to cross themselves, venerate icons, receive a blessing from the priest, enter or exit the church, etc.
- ❖ If necessary, it is okay to gently correct campers who are not in your cabin.

Phone Calls Home (Campers)

Campers, especially homesick and younger ones, may ask to call home to speak to their parents. Phone calls often cause more homesickness. If at all possible, try to comfort and encourage the camper so that a phone call is not necessary. Camper phone calls may only be made with the permission of the Camp Director. If a camper does receive permission to call home, remember the following:

- ❖ Stay near the camper as he/she calls home. Listen to what the camper is telling his/her parents and make sure stories are not being made up so the parents will let him/her leave early.
- ❖ Limit the phone call to a short period of time. The phone call is only meant for the camper to say a quick hello to his/her parents and check in.

Cabin Photos/Camp Photo

Sometime during the week photographs will be taken of the entire group and of each cabin group. Make sure you and all your campers are wearing your CSG T-Shirts. Also, make sure the cabin photo is appropriate (no poses that are suggestive or that make any camper feel embarrassed or excluded) – make it a positive experience with a photo that shows their beautiful smiling faces!

Camper Safety Information

Supervision of Campers

For campers ages 9-14 there is to be at least 1 staff member for up to 8 overnight campers. For campers ages 15-18 there is to be at least 1 staff member for up to 10 overnight campers.

Campers are never to be left alone at any time. If you see a camper by himself/herself, find out what is wrong and direct him/her to the proper place to be.

If a camper is missing from a session that you are supervising, be sure to alert another staff member who can locate the camper. If the camper is not found within a few minutes, immediately notify the Camp Director or a Camp Ewalu staff member.

At all camp activities, there should be at least **two Camp St. George staff members** present at all times even activities that are supervised by Camp Ewalu staff (e.g. challenge courses, pool, etc.).

Counselors should remain in their cabin with their campers after lights out until it is quiet and campers are asleep. Only then are counselors allowed to step just outside their cabin if necessary. They must remain just outside the cabin where campers can be heard. Counselors may only leave their unit with the permission of the Camp Director.

Discipline of Campers

No camp staff shall engage in any physical punishment or any punishment that poses undue emotional stress on campers. Any “out of the ordinary” discipline problems should be handled by the Camp Director.

Release of Campers

No camper is to be released to anyone outside of camp without the verified knowledge and consent of the Camp Director. Anyone taking a camper from camp property, including the last day of the week, must sign the camper out with the counselor *and* the Camp Director.

Check-In Day Verification

The Registrar will verify that all campers that were expected to arrive have checked in by the end of the registration time. If there are any campers that have not arrived, the Registrar will notify the Camp Director.

Cabin Maintenance

Seek out a Camp Ewalu staff member regarding any maintenance problems.

Unknown Person on Camp Property

In the event that an unknown person enters the campgrounds please observe the following policy:

- ❖ If at all possible, never approach a suspicious person or unknown person alone. Immediately notify the camp director.
- ❖ As safely as possible, warmly welcome him or her to the camp and direct him/her to the office or to the camp director.

Abuse

Any accusation or talk of *any type of abuse* at home or at camp must be reported directly to the Camp Director. This includes parent (or relative/friend) to camper, staff to camper, or camper-to-camper cases of abuse. All comments regarding abuse should be taken with the utmost seriousness, and addressed immediately. Warning signs that one should look out for re unusual bruising or scarring, inappropriate social interactions such as excessive physical contact or aversion to physical contact, unusual comments about parental authority.

- ❖ Do not try to “investigate” the matter yourself or ask too many questions – you may actually hinder a proper investigation and professional intervention.
- ❖ Do not talk to *anyone else* about what you have heard – take it to the Camp Director *only!*
- ❖ When you talk to the Camp Director, do so in private and not in the company of other camp staff or campers.

Bullying

Bullying is any intentional hurtful act committed by one or more persons against another. Bullying occurs when there is an imbalance of power between a bully and a victim. The main types of bullying include:

Physical – punching, hitting, shoving, stealing personal things, or getting into someone’s personal space when asked not to

Verbal – name calling, hurtful teasing, taunting, unwanted nicknames, gossiping

Relational – exclusion, humiliation, blackmailing, manipulating friendships

*If bullying of any kind is observed, intervene by stepping in and separating the individuals involved. Report any bullying behavior to the Camp Director.

Communications during a Tragic Incident

In the event of a tragic incident, all communication with Media and/or Parents should be done via the Camp Director or his designate, and not by any other camp personnel. If the media or some stranger is on camp grounds, direct them to the camp office and notify the Camp Director immediately. In non-emergency situations, parents should only be contacted with the prior approval of the Camp Director.

Emergency Procedures

The Camp Ewalu Staff will provide information regarding emergency procedures. A handout on emergency information provided at Staff Training should be added to the counselor’s clipboard. Communication during an emergency is handled by utilizing walkie-talkies.

Check-in Day

Check-in Day, the joy filled day when you meet your campers for the first time! Your first seconds with your campers will be perhaps nervous for both you and them. Break the ice with a welcoming smile and introduce yourself. You will have the opportunity to meet their families or whoever is dropping them off. Take the time to meet them and allow them to get to know you. They will want to know who they are giving their child away to and may have questions for you. You get to be welcoming and reassuring for both parents and campers alike. This first impression will send homesickness far away and allow parents to have peace of mind. When it is time for campers to say goodbye to their parents, give them their proper space, while also being quick to engage the camper with our activities to help the camper adjust to camp and become comfortable with you.

Following are 5 important things to remember on the first day:

- **Hello!** Greet everyone you see, both parents and campers. Welcome them to the camp. Shake their hand. Be excited, energetic and friendly. Consider the person you’re meeting - if the camper is 9 years old and only 3 feet tall - crouch down to their level and introduce yourself, rather than standing as an intimidating figure looming over them.
- **You Can Do It!** Stay positive. Registration day can be hectic and long. Stay strong and focused, and support one another.
- **Friends.** Get to know the camper – his/her interests, things you have in common, etc. Your immediate attentiveness will help the camper feel safe, adjust to his/her new surroundings, and feel connected to you.

- **Luggage.** When a camper arrives, help them carry their luggage to the cabin. It is important to help them make up their bed and get settled because it gives them a specific place they can call home for the week. They do not need to unpack everything, however, a packed suitcase gives them the idea that they can still leave if they are having a bad time. No campers should be in the units unattended - not on the first day - not ever. Parents are allowed down to the cabins only on the first day as campers are moving in but must also be escorted by a counselor. **IMPORTANT:** It is very important that you check luggage for food – and especially perishable food. Remember no food is allowed in the cabins!
- **Introduce and Involve.** Introduce campers to other campers and other counselors. Remembering campers’ names can be hard, but it means so much to call a camper by his or her first name. Assist them in getting involved with the activities provided and do anything to involve them with other staff and campers to help them feel at home.

As registration come to an end your cabin should have beds made up and luggage neatly stored. Your campers should be ready for the swim test with swimsuits under clothes and pool towels on hand. Campers should hang out with one another and with staff at the Creation Center near the volleyball court area. The bell will ring at 4:15 p.m. for the all-camp swim test. At the pool, Ewalu staff will explain the pool rules and run the test efficiently by cabin. When ALL your campers are finished, head back to the cabin to change for Dinner and Welcome Night, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Start off strongly with the motto, *“Early is on time, and on time is late!”*

All campers may briefly call home upon arrival at camp if their parents did not bring them. Counselors should check with their campers when first meeting them to make sure this happens immediately after arrival.

The first night is reserved to introduce the staff, explain the rules of camp and play ice breaker games to help the campers begin to feel comfortable with one another.

Remember that it is easier to be stricter with your cabin at the beginning of the week and to loosen up as the week progresses than it is to get stricter as the week goes on. Take time to reinforce the camp rules and to explain the daily/weekly schedule to your campers so they know what to expect. (Again, it would be helpful to put up posters to help your campers – daily schedule, cleaning schedule, camp rules, afternoon activities schedule, what to bring to the various activities, etc.)

Check-out Day

Day before leaving

There will be a lot of logistical things to handle during the last 24 hours before the campers leave. Remind the campers to collect their scattered belongings. These might include arts projects, pool towels and checking the Lost & Found. The last two nights are good opportunities to “wrap-up” the week at camp during “cabin time.” This will help your campers take many of the things they learned and experienced throughout the week and apply them in their daily lives back home.

The Night before departure

Before going to bed that night, have your campers packed and ready for the morning. This is the time items often get lost and not packed. Check under beds, in the bathroom, and in other “hidden” places to prevent camper clothing being left behind.

It is good to end the night with a memorable activity to end camp in the most positive way. Debriefing activities are great; reminiscing on the week, identifying “take-aways”, highs and lows. Encourage campers to take the things they learned this week home with them and implement in their daily lives!

Medications will be returned according to the Health Director's instructions.

Departure Day

In the morning, your campers will be leaving after breakfast. During this time counselors will be given a packet with camp & cabin pictures. While departures are taking place, make sure your remaining campers are supervised. Make every effort to talk with parents when possible. Share positive things about their child and about the week, and thank the parent(s) for entrusting their child to you. All campers must be signed out by the person specified to pick them up on your camper checkout sheet.

Health Information

Camper Assessment

All campers will be assessed upon arrival to Camp St. George by the Health Care Team. All medications will be given to the Health Director with the exception of rescue inhalers for the treatment for acute asthma. Please observe your campers for behavior issues or any other related problems. Notify Health Director of any potential problems or concerns you may find.

Hygiene

It is the counselor's responsibility to make sure each child takes a daily shower (younger campers will need reminders to use water and soap!) and brushes teeth twice daily. If a camper needs personal hygiene items such as: toothbrush/toothpaste, shampoo, or deodorant/antiperspirant, or special hygiene items for girls, please see the Health Director.

Nutrition

Observe your campers for any eating problems. Campers must be at all meals and drink at least 8 oz. of water with each meal. Campers may be experiencing meals prepared by Camp Ewalu Staff for the first time! Be sure to report any nutritional concerns to the Health Director.

Top 10 Health Concerns

- **Asthma Attack**
If the camper/staff is having difficulty breathing, have them sit in a cool area and use their inhaler. Improved? Bring to Infirmary. No Improvement? Call for Health Director.
- **Bowel Irregularity**
If there is suspicion of constipation, have the camper drink plenty of fluids and eat fruits/vegetables. If the problem continues, contact Health Director. Diarrhea can quickly become a big concern especially for younger campers. Contact Health Director right away!
- **Choking**
Ask camper/staff if they are choking! Universal sign is both hands to throat and no coughing or vocal sounds. They need your help right now! Stop what you are doing, tell them you will help in a calm voice. Use the Heimlich maneuver to relieve the obstruction. We will use the American Heart Association guidelines for choking. Stay with the victim and immediately CALL FOR HELP!
- **Communicable Disease**
Prevention is the key. Insist on frequent hand washing, especially before meals and at bedtime. Drown the germs! Have campers sleep with the greatest distance between their heads. Cough or sneeze into bent elbow. Any sign of cough, cold, rash or red eye, see Health Director.
- **Dehydration**
Everyone needs to drink plenty of water throughout the day. All campers and staff must drink at least one full glass of water at each meal. At camp, we are always on the go, outside in the sun and much more active than we are in our normal lives, so we must drink plenty of water to keep our bodies hydrated. If you suspect dehydration, give the camper water to drink and sit in a cool place. If there is no improvement, call for the Health Director.

- **Earaches**
If your camper complains of an earache or has any ear drainage, take him/her to the Infirmary. You will be notified if your camper has an ear infection or “swimmers ear”. No swimming until cleared by the Health Director.
- **Faint or Dizzy**
Get camper/staff to a cool area and have them lie down with feet elevated. Cool cloth to face. Call for Health Director.
- **Heat Cramps/Exhaustion**
Symptoms may include painful muscle spasms or cramps in abdomen or legs, moist, pale or flushed skin, headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue. Treatment includes rest in a cool area out of the sun, applying cool, wet cloths to the skin; and giving fluids to drink if no nausea or vomiting. Any unconsciousness is a **911 emergency!** Stay with camper and call for help immediately!
- **Insect Stings/Skin Rashes**
A variety of bees, wasps and yellow jackets live in rural Iowa. Stings from these and other insects can cause severe allergic reactions. Comfort camper and have them sit quietly. Stay with camper and have someone else call for help right away! Many species of Iowa plant life can be a source of blistering skin rashes. Seek care from the Infirmary or Health Director.
- **Nosebleeds**
To stop the bleed, have the camper sit, lean forward, and apply pressure by gently squeezing the nose just below the bridge of the nose. If nosebleed is caused by injury, get help immediately!

Universal Precautions

- **Federal regulations require that barriers (gloves, mask, etc.) be worn when cleaning up any blood or body fluids.**
- **Use barriers when treating all open wounds and injuries.**
- **Hand washing, sanitizing, disinfecting procedures and waste disposal require special care.**
- **Masks, gloves and lead proof containers are found in each cabin unit.**
- **Extra supplies are in the infirmary.**
- **Waste materials (including medical waste) are to be placed in a sealed and leak proof container for disposal. No exceptions!**
- **Areas should be sprayed with disinfecting solutions found in cabin units or Infirmary.**
- **Allow solution to sit for one minute to dry before wiping up.**
- **Report any incidents that require Universal Precautions to Health Director.**

Fasting

Do you fast?

Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see a poor man, take pity on him.

If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast by being free of greed.

Let the feet fast by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eyes fast by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful.

Let the ear fast by not listening to evil talk and gossip.

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism.

For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brother?

-St. John Chrysostom

Fasting is a big part of our lives as Orthodox Christians and, as St. John Chrysostom teaches, it is not only about food. At camp we are blessed to experience fasting in the sense of “quiet” and freedom from the distractions of the world. Fasting is one of the ascetical disciplines given to us by our Holy Church in her great love and wisdom. Fasting should not be seen merely as “obligation,” but rather as “opportunity.” By fasting we deny ourselves in order to draw closer to God. At camp we observe the following Fasts of the Church:

❖ Every Wednesday and Friday

The standard set **for camp** is to fast from *meat only* during these times. If you wish to follow the fast more strictly, please discuss this with the Camp Director.

Prayer

“...you awake in the morning. You can be aware and train yourself to be aware that you are being resurrected as Lazarus was, because sleep is, as far as you are concerned, as total as death. In sleep you are unaware of anything, you are helpless, you are defenseless, the whole world ceases to exist as though you were dead.

And then God calls you, “Come.” And you enter into a day that has never existed in history; it is a day totally new. And God says, “Walk into it, in My name.” And so you could simply say, “Lord, bless this day for me, and bless me for this day.” And walk into it as you would walk onto a vast plain covered with snow. It is pure, there is not one footstep, and so you must ask yourself, “How do I walk safely? In what direction do I walk?” And walk!

And then you should take every meeting as a God-given situation, every event as a God-given event. You can, when you meet a person or a situation say, “Lord, give me vision, give me understanding, give me wisdom, give me the right words and the right action.” Then, in the process when you are hesitant, you say, “Lord, give me Your light.”

When it is over, turn to God and say, “Lord, if I have said or done the right thing, bless it to be like a seed that can bring a rich harvest. If I have done wrong, erase it from the memory of this person.” Remember the lesson which comes from the old Russian children’s story. The only important moment in life is the present moment, because the past is no more and the future is not yet. The only important person in life is the person with whom you are now, and the most important thing in life is to do now for this person the right thing. Then there will be no moment when events can prevent you from praying.”

(Metropolitan ANTHONY of Sourozh)

We strive to “pray without ceasing” but we are weak. In order to be strengthened, we must commit ourselves to a daily rule of prayer - at a specific time, in a specific place and with specific prayers. Personal prayer is different than corporate prayer, or worship. As Metropolitan ANTHONY of Sourozh also says,

“It is by having personal prayer, relating to God personally day in, day out, that when you come into a liturgical sequence which is intensely personal, and at the same time greater than you, that you can bring into it, or receive from it, the spirit of prayer. When you come into a liturgical service you must allow yourself to be immersed in God – immersed in prayer. And it is only if you are immersed in God and in prayer that you take part with others. It’s not by singing, not by serving, not by acting, not by doing anything. It’s by going into God in a situation which is peculiarly intense because the prayer of all the Church carries you, and you carry the prayers of others.”

At camp we strive to live and teach the importance of prayer, both personal and corporate. We encourage counselors to make time with your campers for even the most basic Morning and Evening prayers. Set up a prayer corner or altar (preferably facing East) with your icons, prayer book and Bible (candles only at the discretion of the Camp Director). You may want to prepare ahead of time cabin posters with the Trisagion prayers to hang by your cabin altar to help your campers pray together. (You may also want to hang posters around the cabin with scripture verses, sayings of the Holy Fathers, or other encouraging words!)

Each person (counselor or camper) is different, and at a different level spiritually, so choosing the appropriate prayers for your cabin is very important. Included in the Staff Manual are the basic Morning and Evening Prayers. It is always best, at minimum, to pray the Trisagion Prayers as this is the invocation of the Holy Spirit, Who then inspires our hearts to further prayer. You may also use other prayers or seek help from the Camp Director for prayers that might be appropriate.

Making time for daily Bible reading is also an important discipline in our lives as Orthodox Christians. Whether you choose to read the daily Epistle and Gospel readings in the morning or read the Psalms while your campers are falling asleep or find time simply to read one verse of scripture each day, you will be teaching, encouraging and inspiring your campers! *“Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” -Psalm 119:105*

The Camp Counselor as the Empathetic Listener

*By Ann Mitsakos, 5-99
St. Vladimir's Seminary*

*Paragraphs in italics are from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

Suppose you've been having trouble with your eyes and you decide to go to your eye doctor for help. After briefly listening to your complaint, he takes off his glasses and hands them to you.

“Put these on,” he says. “I’ve worn this pair of glasses for ten years now and they’ve really helped me. I have an extra pair at home; you can wear these.”

So you put them on, but it only makes the problem worse.

*“This is terrible!” you exclaim. “I can’t see a thing!”
“Well, what’s wrong?” he asks. “They work great for me. Try harder.”
“I am trying,” you insist. “Everything is a blur.”
“Well, what’s the matter with you? Think positively.”
“Okay. I swear I can’t see a thing.”
“Boy, are you ungrateful!” he chides. “After all I’ve done to help you!”*

What are the chances you’d go back to that eye doctor the next time you needed help? Not very good. . . You wouldn’t have much confidence in someone who doesn’t diagnose before he or she prescribes. But how often do we diagnose before we prescribe in communication?

A Lost Opportunity

*“Come on, Julie, tell me how you feel. I know it’s hard, but I’ll try to understand.”
“Oh, I don’t know. You’d think it was stupid.”*

“Of course I wouldn’t! You can tell me. That’s what counselors are for. What’s making you so unhappy?”

“Oh, I don’t know.”

“Come on, what is it?”

“Well, if you really want to know, I don’t want to go to the dance.”

“What?” you respond surprised. “You seriously don’t want to go to the dance? The dance is the best part of the week! It’s *so* much fun once you get there. You’ve just got to get a positive attitude about it, then you’ll have a good time.”

Pause.

“Now go ahead. Tell me how you’re feeling.”

We have such a tendency to rush in, to fix things up with good advice. But we often fail to take the time to diagnose, to really, deeply understand the problem first. If we’re going to be of any use as counselors at all, we’ve got to seek to be empathic listeners.

To understand someone we’ve got to *listen* to him or her--yet of all the means of communication in life, listening is the one that we’ve had the least amount of training in. *What education have you had that enables you to listen so that you really, deeply understand another human being from that individual’s own frame of reference?*

Comparatively few people have had any training in listening at all. Being an empathic listener as a counselor involves a deep shift in the way we usually operate, in the way we usually think about ourselves as counselors. We usually seek first to be listened to.

Back to Basics

A certain kind of being listened to is essential. A camp counselor, if nothing else, needs to maintain order within a cabin, keep their campers on schedule and through firm, loving discipline maintain peaceful order within their cabin so that their kids can be learning and having fun. But for most counselors this role of being *listened to* can tap into a larger, usually unspoken, desire of the counselor: to make kids like them. This usually takes one of two forms:

- A. "I want my campers to love me and think I’m the greatest counselor." You tell them lots of funny jokes and cool stories. We naturally want this kind of affirmation of being loved.
- B. "I want to make the kids as I am. . . I’ve got life figured out--I’ll tell them what my life has been like and this is how they should act."

These attitudes usually lead us to see ourselves as knowledgeable advice-givers, as “counselors” when we’re interacting with our campers when serious issues come up. We’ve presented ourselves as cool, knowledgeable authority figures, and this can carry over when we have one-on-one “counseling moments” with a camper, if the camper is having a problem. We typically seek mainly to be understood by the camper, not to understand them.

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They are either speaking or preparing to speak. They’re filtering everything through their own view of life, reading their autobiography into other people’s lives.

“I know exactly how you feel!”

“I went through the very same thing. Let me tell you about my experience.”

They’re constantly projecting their own home movies onto other people’s behavior. They prescribe their own glasses for everyone with whom they interact. If they have a problem with someone their attitude is,

“That person just doesn’t understand.”

So often we are so filled with our own rightness, our own autobiography that our conversations become collective monologues, and we never really understand what is going on inside another human being.

Let's take a step back for a minute and look at some of the "facts" of who we are as Orthodox camp counselors, and what we're doing.

- A. Campers are only usually at camp for a week. Counselors, for the most part, will not have an ongoing relationship with their campers. One of the biggest mistakes we can make is to think we can solve camper problems in this week.
- B. The camp counselor is *not* a trained counselor. A few days of staff training don't train you to responsibly deal with the inner lives of kids. Medical doctors, who are responsible for people's physical lives, go through at least six years of intensive training before they can write prescriptions. Take this example of how easy it is to misdiagnose:

When our daughter Jenny was only two months old, she was sick one Saturday, the day of a football game in our community that dominated the consciousness of almost everyone. It was an important game-some 60,000 people were there. Sandra (my wife) and I would like to have gone, but we didn't want to leave little Jenny. Her vomiting and diarrhea had us concerned.

The doctor was at that game. He wasn't our personal physician, but he was the one on call. When Jenny's situation got worse, we decided we needed some medical advice.

Sandra dialed the stadium and had him paged. It was right at a critical time in the game, and she could sense an officious tone in his voice.

"Yes?" he said briskly. "What is it?"

"This is Mrs. Covey, Doctor, and we're concerned about our daughter, Jenny."

"What's the situation?" he asked.

Sandra described the symptoms, and he said,

"Okay, I'll call in a prescription. Which is your pharmacy?"

When she hung up, Sandra felt that in her rush she hadn't really given him full data, but that what she told him was adequate.

"Do you think he realizes that Jenny is just a newborn?" I asked her.

"I'm sure he does," Sandra replied.

"But he's not our doctor. He's never even treated her."

"Well, I'm pretty sure he knows."

"Are you willing to give her the medicine unless you're absolutely sure he knows?"

(Sandra was silent.) "What are we going to do?" she finally said.

"Call him back," I said.

"You call him back," Sandra replied.

So I did. He was paged out of the game once again.

"Doctor," I said, "when you called in that prescription, did you realize that Jenny is just two months old?"

"No!" he exclaimed. "I didn't realize that. It's good you called me back. I'll change the prescription immediately."

It is this easy for doctors to misdiagnose; how much easier it is for camp counselors to ill-advise their campers, saying things without an awareness of the possible repercussions! Licensed counselors have at

least a Masters degree. What's more, since our camp is an Orthodox one, the setting is such that our campers are often thinking about their *spiritual* lives. The state of a person's spiritual life is arguably more of a life and death issue than their physical life.

- C. The kids are at camp to learn more about the Orthodox Christian faith--the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Have we spent years studying the Bible so that we can say that we *really* know what the gospel of Jesus Christ is? Someone who is advising/counseling a camper at an Orthodox camp should have been studying Scripture for years so that they can answer from the mind-frame sculpted by the Word of God. Camp counselors need to leave counseling/advising to priests and those with at least half a head of gray hair. We forget sometimes in our American culture that those with true wisdom must be older, with life experience.

Empathetic Listening

When another person speaks, we're usually "listening" at one of four levels. We may be ignoring another person, not really listening at all. We may practice pretending. "Yeah. Uh-huh. Right." We may practice selective listening, hearing only certain parts of the conversation. We often do this when we're listening to the constant chatter of a preschool child. Or we may even practice attentive listening, paying attention or focusing energy on the words that are being said. But very few of us ever practice the fifth level, the highest form of listening, empathic listening.

Empathic (from empathy) listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. You look out through it, you see the world the way they see the world, you understand their paradigm, you understand how they feel.

Empathy is not sympathy. Sympathy is a form of agreement, a form of judgment. And it is sometimes the more appropriate emotion and response. But people often feed on sympathy. It makes them dependent. The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it's that you fully, deeply, understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually. Empathic listening involved much more than registering, reflecting, or even understanding the words that are said. Communications experts estimate, in fact, that only 10% of our communication is represented by the words we say. Another 30 percent is represented by our sounds, and 60 percent by our body language. In empathic listening, you listen with your ears, but you also, and more importantly, listen with your eyes and with your heart. You listen for feeling, for meaning. You listen for behavior. You use your right brain as well as your left. You sense, you intuit, you feel.

Empathic listening is so powerful because it gives you accurate data to work with. Instead of projecting your own autobiography and assuming thoughts, feelings, motives and interpretation, you're dealing with the reality inside another person's head and heart. You're listening to understand. You're focused on receiving the deep communication of another human soul. Empathic listening is, deeply therapeutic and healing because it gives a person "psychological air."

If all the air were suddenly sucked out of the room you're in right now, what would happen to your interest in reading this? You wouldn't care about it; you wouldn't care about anything except getting air. Survival would be your only motivation.

But now that you have air, it doesn't motivate you. This is one of the greatest insights in the field of human motivation: satisfied needs do not motivate. It's only the unsatisfied need that motivates. Next to physical survival, the greatest need of a human being is psychological air. Next to physical survival, the greatest need of a human being is psychological survival--to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, to be appreciated.

When you listen with empathy to another person, you give that person psychological air. This need for psychological air impacts communication in every area of life. . . Seeking first to understand, diagnosing before you prescribe, is hard. It's so much easier in the short run to hand someone a pair of glasses that have fit you so well in the past few years.

Four Autobiographical Responses

Because we listen autobiographically, we tend to respond in one of four ways. We evaluate—we either agree or disagree; we probe—we ask questions from our own frame of reference; we advise—we give counsel based on our own experience; or we interpret—we try to figure people out, to explain their motives, their behavior, based on our own motives and behavior.

These responses come naturally to us. We are deeply scripted in them; we live around models of them all the time. But how do they affect our ability to really understand?

If I'm trying to communicate with a camper, can he/she feel free to open up to me when I evaluate everything he/she says before he/she really explains it? Am I giving the camper psychological air?

And how does my camper feel when I probe? Probing is playing twenty questions. It's autobiographical, it controls, and it invades. It's also logical, and the language of logic is different from the language of sentiment and emotion. You can play twenty questions all day and not find out what's important to someone.

Camper: I've had it with this camp. I hate it here.

Counselor: What's the matter?

Camper: I hate all this church and the sessions and activities--they're boring and stupid.

Counselor: You just can't see the great parts of it yet. I felt the same way when I first came to camp. I remember getting so annoyed by all the rules and stuff. But camp has turned out to be the coolest thing in my life. Just hang in there. Give it some time. (advising)

Camper: I've given it three days and I don't want to be here all week--the activities are stupid and I don't have any friends in my cabin.

Counselor: What do you mean the activities are stupid? They're really fun if you get into them. Have you tried making friends with the other kids in your cabin? (evaluating)

Camper: Yeah, I've tried, they all have their own friends already and they know everybody.

Counselor: It may look that way now, but they all started out just like you. It just takes some effort to get to know people--stick it out. Find out things you have in common with them. (advising)

Camper: I want to be home with my friends, my TV, and my music.

Counselor: Do you realize what a great opportunity it is to be here in the great outdoors, with the lake, all the activities, and we get to learn about our church in a cool setting? (evaluating)

Camper: I know it's supposed to be great, but I'm just not having fun.

Counselor: I'm telling you, try making more of an effort to get to know the kids in your cabin and to listen in the OL and Sounding Board sessions and you'll start to like it." (advising, evaluating)

Camper: Yeah, whatever. I'll see you later.

Obviously, the counselor was well intended. Obviously, he wanted to help. But did he/she begin to really understand?

Let's look more carefully at the camper - not just his words, but also his thoughts and feelings (expressed parenthetically below) and the possible effect of some of the counselors' autobiographical responses.

What's Really Going On

Camper: I've had it with this camp. I hate it here. (*I want to talk with you, to get your attention.*)

Counselor: What's the matter? (*You're interested! Good!*)

Camper: I hate all this church and the sessions and activities--they're boring and stupid. (*I've got a problem with camp, and I feel just terrible.*)

Counselor: You just can't see the great parts of it yet. I felt the same way when I first came to camp. (*Oh no, here comes my counselor's autobiography that we already know from first night devotions. This isn't what I want to talk about. I don't really care how great camp was for them. I want to get to the problem.*) I remember getting so annoyed by all the rules and

stuff. But camp has turned out to be the coolest thing in my life. Just hang in there. Give it some time. *(Time won't solve my problem. I wish I could tell you. I wish I could just spit it out.)*

Camper: I've given it three days and I don't want to be here all week-the activities are stupid and I don't have any friends in my cabin.

Counselor: What do you mean the activities are stupid? They're really fun if you get into them. Have you tried making friends with the other kids in your cabin? *(This counselor won't like me if I don't fit in with the rest of the cabin. They won't like me unless I'm loving camp. I have to justify what I just said.)*

Camper: Yeah, I've tried, they all have their own friends already and they know everybody.

Counselor: It may look that way now, but they all started out just like you. *(Oh great, here comes a lecture.)* It just takes some effort to get to know people-stick it out. Find out things you have in common with them. *(How do you know I haven't tried, you've been too busy being buddy-buddy with your counselor friends and the campers you had last year.)*

Camper: I want to be home with my friends, my TV, and my music. *(I've got great friends at home-I fit in with my friends at home.)*

Counselor: Do you realize what a great opportunity it is to be here in the great outdoors, with the lake, all the activities, and we get to learn about our church in a cool setting? *(We're beating around the bush. If you'd just listen, I really need to talk to you about something.)*

Camper: I know it's supposed to be great, but I'm just not having fun. *(Maybe there is something wrong with me.)*

Counselor: I'm telling you, try making more of an effort to get to know the kids in your cabin and to listen in the OL and Sounding Board sessions and you'll start to like it. You're really privileged to be here." *(Oh great, here comes the guilt trip.)*

Camper: Yeah, whatever. I'll see you later.

Can you see how limited we are when we try to understand another person on the basis of words alone, especially when we're looking at that person through our own glasses? Can you see how limiting our autobiographical responses are to a person who is genuinely trying to get us to understand his autobiography?

You will never be able to truly step inside another person, to see the world as he/she sees it, until you develop the empathetic listening skills to do it.

The skills, the tip of the iceberg of empathic listening, involve four developmental stages.

The first and least effective is to mimic content. Without doing this thoughtfully, it can be insulting to people and causes them to close up. It is, however, a first stage skill because it at least causes you to listen to what is being said.

Mimicking content is easy. You just listen to the words that come out of someone's mouth and you repeat them. You're hardly even using your brain at all.

Camper: I've had it with this camp-I hate it here.

Counselor: You've had it with this camp.

You have essentially repeated back the content of what was being said. You haven't evaluated or proved or advised or interpreted. You've at least showed you're paying attention to his words. But to understand, you want to do more.

The second stage of empathic listening is to rephrase the content. It's a little more effective, but it's still limited to the verbal communication.

Camper: I've had it with this camp. I hate it here.

Counselor: You don't want to be at camp anymore.

This time, you've put his meaning into your own words. Now you're thinking about what he said, mostly with the left side, the reasoning, logical side of the brain.

The third stage brings your right brain into operation. You reflect feeling.

Camper: I've had it with this camp. I hate it here.

Counselor: You're feeling really frustrated.

Now you're not paying as much attention to what he's saying as you are to the way he feels about what he's saying. The fourth stage includes both the second and the third. You rephrase the content and reflect the feeling.

Camper: I've had it with this camp. I hate it here.

Counselor: You're really frustrated with this camp.

Frustration is the feeling; camp is the content. You're using both sides of your brain to understand both sides of the camper's communication.

Now, what happens when you use fourth stage empathic listening skills is really incredible. As you authentically seek to understand, you rephrase content and reflect feeling, you give the camper psychological air. You also help them work through their own thoughts and feelings. As they grow in their confidence of your sincere desire to really listen and understand, the barrier between what is going on inside him and what's actually being communicated to you disappears. The camper is not thinking and feeling one thing and communicating another. They begin to communicate their innermost tender feelings and thoughts.

Camper: I've had it with this camp. I hate it here. *(I want to talk with you, to get your attention.)*

Counselor: You're really frustrated about camp. *(That's right! That's how I feel.)*

Camper: Yeah, I am. I don't think I should be here. I'm not getting anything out of it.

Counselor: You feel like camp is not doing you any good. *(Let me think, is that what I mean?)*

Camper: Well, yeah. Camp is supposed to be fun, but I'm really not having a good time. I think it's because none of my friends are here.

Counselor: You really wish your friends from home were here. *(Well. . .)*

Camper: I guess. The kids in our cabin all think they are so cool-it is really annoying.

Counselor: You feel our cabin is annoying.

Camper: They talk about people all the time-I hear them saying obnoxious things about everyone.

Counselor: They shouldn't be talking about other people.

Camper: I even heard them making fun of that shirt I was wearing yesterday.

Counselor: It really hurt to hear them talking about what you were wearing.

Camper: Yeah, how do they know what's cool in my hometown? I was trying to tell them what it's like-they all kept talking about camp, and I didn't have anything else to say.

What a difference real understanding can make! All the well-meaning advice in the world won't amount to anything if we're not even addressing the real problem. And we'll never get to the problem if we're so caught up in our own autobiography, our own view of life, that we don't take the time to see the world from another point of view. To listen--to really listen--I need to put myself on hold. The listening is not about me, it's about the person I'm listening to.

Camper: Yeah, how do they know what's cool in my hometown? I was trying to tell them what it's like-they all kept talking about camp, and I didn't have anything else to say.

Counselor: You felt excluded because you are new to camp.

Camper: I thought this was supposed to be a Christian camp.

Here is where our job as listening counselors gets tough: assumptions/perceptions of the camper will come up that you may really want to correct-i.e., it's really tempting to advise, "Just because this is a Christian camp doesn't always mean that the people here will act the way they're supposed to." But try to hold off on advice. The chance that you could misdiagnose or say something that might do more harm than it would good is too great.

Camper: I feel like I might as well go home. But I don't want to quit.

Counselor: You feel torn. You're in the middle of a dilemma.

Camper: What do you think I should do?

And this is the other big challenge. If you've been an effective listener, chances are your camper will ask for your advice. Is it finally time to give advice when they ask you? How do we know when I actually can and should give advice? A general rule for measuring this: if at least half of the hairs on my head are gray, then go ahead and state your opinion. Most counselors are too young to give solid advice to campers, no matter how wise people tell them they are. If you're really concerned, you could suggest that the priest and/or camp director is the one they should talk to. The best, safest policy when a camper asks for your input is to ask a gentle question in response. Some great questions might be:

"What do you think I think about this?"

"What do you think I will/should say to you?"

You'll probably be surprised as to what campers come up with. *The key is to genuinely seek the welfare of the individual, to listen with empathy, to let the person get to the problem and the solution at his/her own pace and time. . .*

When people are really hurting and you really listen with a pure desire to understand, you'll be amazed how fast they will open up. They want to open up.

There are people who protest that empathic listening takes too much time. It may take a little more time initially but it will save so much time downstream. The most efficient thing you can do if you're a doctor and want to prescribe a wise treatment is to make an accurate diagnosis. You can't say, "I'm in too much of a hurry. I don't have time to make a diagnosis. Just take this treatment."

Empathic Listening is something camp counselors must learn and practice. When you communicate with campers, put aside your own autobiography and genuinely seek to understand your camper. Even when your campers don't want to open up about their problems, you can be empathic. You can sense their hearts, you can sense the hurt, and you can respond, "You seem down today." They may say nothing; that's okay. You've shown understanding and respect.

Don't push; be patient; be respectful. Campers don't have to open up verbally before you can empathize. You can empathize all the time with their behavior. You can be discerning, sensitive, and aware and you can live outside your autobiography when that is needed.

Instead of trying to devote your energy to trying to solve camper problems, devote it rather to *listening*. Devote it first and foremost to *listening* to the Word of God. All the principles we've been talking about how to put aside our own autobiographies when we're listening to another person can be applied directly to how we read the Bible and hear it read to us in Church--listen to it. Let yourself be formed by it.

And devote your time as a counselor to *listening* to your campers. Listening is a skill. It is hard to listen because we want to filter things through our own view of life--this is quite normal, and usually quite unhelpful. True, empathic listening is basically an act of deep love.

Camp Counseling Magic

Making ordinary moments... extraordinary!

By Jeffrey Leiken, MA

Greg was a first time camp counselor. He went to college in the Midwest and could teach tennis. There was nothing remarkable about him on the surface. He was a nice guy, got along well with his peers and did what he was asked to do. When the campers arrived though something transpired. Campers from all ages came to congregate around him. Even some of the toughest campers in camp liked him. At his mid-summer evaluation the Head Counselor dared to ask him this question: "What is your secret? What are you doing that all these kids are drawn to you?"

Greg's answer was simple, yet poignant, "I consistently do the little things that matter, and I do them when others don't."

This past winter I facilitated a two-day winter retreat for 20 camp counselors from a Northeast summer camp. The intention was to engage them in activity and dialogue which would gather ideas, suggestions and insights on how to improve their camp. The secondary goal was to get this core group working together as a team to bring a heightened spirit of seriousness and commitment to the staff.

One of the activities I asked of them was to imagine and describe their "ideal camp", specifically what it would look, sound and feel like. Then I asked them to think of a time in their history at camp when it was most like this ideal, and what the factors were that made it so. This led to a rich and vivid sharing of stories, mostly of what they called "peak moments". Most of the stories happened around big events or at the final campfire - the moments where sworn enemies came together, where a homesick nightmarish camper wouldn't let go of his counselor when his parents arrived, of a "loser" camper who grew up to become a Director.

These stories are a significant part of camp folklore and mythology. Many camping professionals went into this field because of a moment like this. These defining moments are a significant part of what we teach our counselors to expect. The special event days in particular at many camps have build up of importance and expectation that begins before the campers even arrive. Often when a counselor struggles in week five we tell them "Wait until the busses leave and the kids cry and don't want to say good-bye. Then you'll understand what an impact you made."

The implication of all this is that it is okay to wait while the tension and drama builds, then wait for the extraordinary moments to occur.

There is a whole different approach that many of the most successful effective camp counselors take though. They don't wait. They make every moment important, and they act on it. Greg for example made it a point to go up to three random campers each night at flag lowering ceremony and privately give them accolades for something he liked or admired about them. No one knew he did this and over the course of 54 days of camp, over 150 campers received unsolicited attention and praise from this young man. Some of those compliments he gave were the defining moments for these campers.

Imagine for a moment a camp where EVERY counselor followed this practice.

Benchmarks

Last year one camp director I worked with wanted to dramatically increase the attention and priority her staff put on doing the little things that mattered most to the campers. Rather than emphasize this during orientation only to have it fade into the hustle of daily camp life, she held it out as the most important thing for her staff to have their attention on. Each week she began staff meetings by requiring every counselor to share a story about how they had done something to positively impact a camper's life - calling these "benchmark" moments. The more subtle and unexpected and above and beyond the counselor had to go to do it, the higher the bar was raised. The result was magnificent. She had her closest knit staff ever and the least amount of discipline issues amongst campers. In addition she had virtually no parent complaints - a benchmark most camp professionals would dream to achieve.

Peaceful bedtimes

At night, after lights out coverage is a challenge at many camps. The effort to allow staff time off often means leaving one counselor to cover several cabins at night. No surprise that so many problems arise between campers at night when there is the least coverage. One camp decided to change their policy and require one counselor to be on duty and IN the bunk with their campers until they were asleep. They compensated by making a later curfew for those on time off.

During orientation we spent an entire session on how to do bed times quietly and orderly. The staff was taught how to lead discussions, tell stories and create positive bed time rituals. One counselor started a ritual that spread to his whole unit. Before turning the lights out, he would get every one quiet. Then he'd go around and give each person 30 seconds to talk about the highlight of their day. This was followed by each camper getting 30 more seconds to either thank someone or share something they had learned that day. The campers loved it so much that they came to look forward to their bedtimes! More impressive than that, so did the counselors!

Current events

Another part of the mythology of camping is how "cut off" we are from the rest of the world. One camp counselor last summer was deeply moved and inspired by the story of the coal miners in West Virginia who survived waist deep in near freezing water for three days until they were rescued. In particular he was compelled by the way they tied themselves together and took turns being on the inside of the huddle to keep each other warm. He learned of how they took turns writing notes to their loved ones and sealed them in a waterproof container, not knowing if they would be alive to see them delivered.

This counselor made that story of the coal miners and their courage into his bedtime story that night, only with a twist. He emphasized how these men survived by relying on one another and working as a team. He then asked each camper to take a minute and write a positive, personal note to each other camper in the bunk. He would collect them and distribute them in three days time, much the same as these miners did when they were rescued. This tough group of eleven year old boys quietly scribbled away notes to one another for nearly an hour. When they finally received the notes written to them the whole mood shifted in the bunk and they became one of the most unified in camp.

The unordinary day

A camp counselor decided to take her own initiative to get past the mid-summer slump in week 5. She spontaneously woke her campers one morning to the announcement that "today is Unordinary Day". Her 13 year old campers looked puzzled. She explained that every thing they did that day would be unconventional, unordinary. They began by dressing up for breakfast. Then they went and made other cabin's beds. They enthusiastically participated - in all activities! As the day progressed they become more and more unordinary. The campers decided the most unordinary thing of all that they could do was to be on time and quiet for announcements. They took it upon themselves to get the whole camp on time and quiet. There was such a sense of solidarity and unity amongst the camp that day as the director walked out to the evening line up and was greeted with total silence and attendance. This counselor had a ball as her campers - and all those around her - broke out of the midsummer slump and made an ordinary day, into an extraordinarily unordinary day to remember.

What each of these examples - and the literally hundreds more I've collected over the years - have in common is that the person who started it, acted intentionally. These counselors decided that they would take action now, rather than wait until some special day. Those who do it consistently make summers happen that are magical for those around them. They have summers filled with the kind of moments that others hope for. And they raise the mark of expectation of what is possible when we realize that with the right intention and right action, any moment can be extraordinary. What better time and place to begin exploring what's possible in this domain then right now at your camp this summer.

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Excerpted from Jeffrey's upcoming book: Camp Counseling Magic™.

A letter to my child's staff person...

by Michael Brandwein

How strange it is that I've never met you and in a few days you will become the most important person in my life.

I suppose you've been told that already: "These are other people's children - their most cherished loved ones; they'd actually give up their own life before they would let anything terrible happen to them. . . ." etc., etc. But I hope that you don't think it's strange if I take a few moments to write down a few things that I would want you to know. Oh, sure, there are those official camp forms where I can tell you that my son or daughter is allergic to a rare kind of wallpaper paste, loves volleyball but not when it's cloudy {please keep an eye out for that}, or has promised the parole officer not to set any more of the big fires. I wanted to take a few extra moments to tell you some things that don't really belong on a form.

I've been thinking a lot the last few days about baby-sitters. Whenever I hire one to look after my child, I interview them. I have the chance to meet them, ask them things, and watch how they interact and play with my child and how my child responds to them. I can personally talk to people for whom they've worked before. And I've thought about school: I get to meet the teacher before it starts.

But when a parent sends their child to camp, odds are they've never met the people who will stand in the parent's place. If I understand right, at some camps you don't even know the counselor's name until camp actually begins. I just wanted to tell you that all of this is scary.

Please don't be insulted. I trust the director who hired you and would never think of sending my child unless I did. If the director trusts you, then I trust you. But I know that the director is not going to be taking care of my child personally. You are. And I just wanted you to know what an extraordinary act of faith it is for me to put *my* child into *your* arms. Please hold my child carefully.

I'm sending my child with all of the things that the camp letter said to include. I feel absolutely certain that I've forgotten something and I have this fear that my child will be the only one without it, whatever it is.

I can still remember when my little brother and I went to sleep-over camp in Wisconsin. Our second summer we showed up for only the second four week session. We didn't know that no one did that, and that we'd be walking into a place where everyone already knew everyone else. We showed up proudly wearing our official camp T-shirts, the only kind we'd brought. Unfortunately, no one had told us that these shirts, which were considered the height of coolness our first summer, had been declared the depths of dorkiness for the second summer. When we arrived it was dark. I remember being very grateful for that. Everyone was in the dining hall watching a movie, so we snuck into a corner, away from the stares. I don't think I've ever felt so alone.

And then I remember the first counselor who smiled at me. Who asked me lots of questions about what I liked to do. Who really listened without interrupting or correcting me. I must have talked for three or four minutes with him just smiling and nodding at me. I kept waiting for him to interrupt or something. *Four minutes!* That was a personal record. It had never happened at home. I liked it. I liked it a lot. And then the box of regular, ordinary, no dorky-logo shirts arrived in an emergency package from mom and dad. Things got much better after that. . . .

There were a few other things I wanted to tell you: I don't expect you to be perfect. Heaven knows *I'm* not. With any luck, maybe heaven *doesn't* know. . . I've brought my child up the best way I know how and I know I've made mistakes. I keep trying to learn how to do it better, and just when I think I've got this parenting thing down, my child grows older, changes considerably, and sends me back to the drawing board to figure it all out again. But I have learned one thing: if you don't know, *ask*. Read.

Watch others. Invite help. I have a lot of good friends who I talk to all the time about raising my child. I'd hate to think you were suddenly trying to do this on your own when *I* can't do that myself.

Please know that my child is not perfect either. I'm hoping that you will forgive just as you would like to be forgiven yourself, and that when my child does something that isn't right, that you will focus on helping to show what should be done better the next time. In other words, just treat my child exactly as you will want to be treated if you mess up.

I know you've got a lot of children to take care of. They are all important.

I hope very much that you find something special about mine. I don't mean better. I just mean something unique that sets my child apart as a valuable individual.

You see, I love my child very much. And I tell my child that every day. But the problem is that I've raised a reasonably smart child who figures that it's my job to say "you're smart" and "you look great" and "people really think you're terrific." From time to time my child must wonder if I say these things because they're really true or because I'm *supposed* to say them.

Wouldn't it be great if my child met you, a complete stranger, and you discovered valuable things in my child all on your own? See, if **YOU** find and talk about these positive things, my child can say, "Hey, people notice that I've got good things inside of me. I guess maybe I do. . . ."

So I've sort of ended where I began: talking about strangers. Ironically, the very fact that you are a stranger to my child gives you, in some ways, even more power than I have.

And one final thing: sometimes when I write my thoughts down I understand them better. When I started writing this letter I didn't really see this, but I do now:

It just occurred to me: If you care for my child with love and patience and skill, then you're no stranger. You've suddenly become my most important friend in the world.

Thank you, friend. Have a most wonderful summer!

A Child's Grateful Parent

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mbrandwein@aol.com

Thank you!

Morning Prayers

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

O Heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art in all places and fillest all things; Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life: come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Gracious Lord.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy God, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Troparia to the Holy Trinity

Having arisen from sleep, we fall down before Thee, O Blessed One, and sing to Thee, O Mighty One, the Angelic Hymn: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God. Through the Theotokos, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

From my bed and sleep Thou hast raised me: O Lord, enlighten my mind and my heart, and open my lips that I may praise Thee, O Holy Trinity: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God. Through the Theotokos, have mercy on us.

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen.

Suddenly the Judge shall come, and the deeds of each shall be revealed: but with fear we cry out in the middle of the night: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God. Through the Theotokos, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy. (12 times)

Morning Prayer

O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Thy holy will. In every hour of the day, reveal Thy will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with firm conviction that Thy will governs all. In all my words and deeds, guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by Thee. Teach me to act firmly or wisely without embittering or embarrassing others. Grant me to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to be patient, to forgive and to love. Amen.

Ending Prayer

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, Thou who without stain bearest God the Word, and art truly Theotokos, we magnify thee!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God; through the intercessions of Thy most pure and holy Mother; of Thy holy Forerunner and Baptist, John; of Thy holy, glorious and all-honorable Apostles; of St. George, the patron of our camp; of all our holy patrons and of all Thy Saints; by the protection of our holy guardian angels and all the heavenly powers; and by the power of Thy most precious and life-giving cross; have mercy upon us and save us, for Thou art Good and Holy and the Lover of Mankind. Amen.

Evening Prayers

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

O Heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art in all places and fillest all things; Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life: come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Gracious Lord.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy God, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Troparia of Thanksgiving

Now that the day hath come to a close, I thank Thee, O Lord, and I ask that the evening with the night may be sinless; grant this to me, O Savior, and save me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Now that the day hath passed, I glorify Thee, O Master, and I ask that the evening with the night may be without offence; grant this to me, O Savior, and save me.

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen.

Now that the day hath run its course, I praise Thee, O Holy One, and I ask that the evening with the night may be undisturbed; grant this to me, O Savior, and save me.

Lord, have mercy. (12 times)

Prayer of Repentance

O Lord our God, if during this day I have sinned, whether in word or deed or thought, forgive me all, for Thou art good and lovest mankind. Grant me peaceful and undisturbed sleep and deliver me from all influence and temptation of the evil one. Raise me up again in proper time that I may glorify Thee; for Thou art blessed, with Thine Only-begotten Son and Thine All-holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer for God's Will

O Lord, I know not what to ask of Thee; Thou alone knowest what are my true needs. Thou lovest me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my real needs which are concealed from me. I dare not ask either a cross or consolation. I can only wait on Thee. My heart is open to Thee. Visit and help me for Thy great mercy's sake. Strike me and heal me. Cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Thy holy will and Thine inscrutable ways. I offer myself as a sacrifice to Thee. I put all my trust in Thee. I have no other desire than to fulfill Thy will. Teach me to pray and pray Thou Thyself in me. Amen.

Ending Prayer

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, Thou who without stain bearest God the Word, and art truly Theotokos, we magnify thee!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God; through the intercessions of Thy most pure and holy Mother; of Thy holy Forerunner and Baptist, John; of Thy holy, glorious and all-honorable Apostles; of St. George, the patron of our camp; of all our holy patrons and of all Thy Saints; by the protection of our holy guardian angels and all the heavenly powers; and by the power of Thy most precious and life-giving cross; have mercy upon us and save us, for Thou art Good and Holy and the Lover of Mankind. Amen.

As you lay down to sleep, say:

O Lord Jesus Christ, into Thy hands I commend my soul and my body. Do Thou bless me, have mercy upon me, and grant me life eternal. Amen.