

Lumsden Beach Camp Faith Formation Philosophy



LBC is proud to be a United Church camp. The United Church of Canada is a progressive and liberal Christian denomination. The United Church has a long tradition of spiritual freedom, with a wide theological spectrum and a diversity of interpretations and understandings. We celebrate our diversity of beliefs, and encourage one another to ask questions as part of exploring and deepening faith.

We explore and deepen faith through various forms of social justice, environmental advocacy and promotion of a more compassionate and inclusive community. LBC welcomes and supports people of all faith backgrounds (and no faith background); while some people at camp are from the United Church, many are not.

At LBC we believe that Faith formation at camp is the steady growth of building relationships with self, others, creation and God—in and through community. It is experienced as a powerful undercurrent in every camp program and activity. Faith formation also happens in structured ways—time for reflection and spiritual development is built into each day at camp (Morning Watch, SCT (Spiritual Care Time), Vespers, Nightly Closing Rituals @ Campfire, Singing songs throughout the day, Singing Grace before meals).

Our Guiding Principles:

Lumsden Beach Camp has adopted as our guiding principles for Faith Formation the following, created by the United Church of Canada (United Church Camping).

1. Personal Meaning

Provide campers with opportunities to gain personal meaning through discovering, naming, claiming, and celebrating their God-given gifts and talents.

2. Creativity

Promote creativity and a camper's sense of wonder, by allowing time and supplies for campers to create something new.

3. Mercy & Justice

Provide campers with occasions to find meaning in the community as they engage in acts of mercy and justice.

4. Traditions & Rituals

Develop traditions and rituals that enhance inclusion as they point toward something larger than individual concerns.

5. Environment & Care of Creation

Encourage wonder and deepen campers' awareness of the environment and respect for nature.

6. Sabbath

Offer campers opportunities to experience Sabbath as they step away from the hectic, chaotic way of life that is part of today's society.

7. Questioning

Invite questions from the everyday to the mysterious.

8. Leadership

Develop leaders and enhance leadership qualities among staff and campers.

These guiding principles provide the base of our understanding that Faith Formation is both the goal of formal spiritual exploration times as well as an underlying focus of all aspects of camp.

All our Staff and Volunteers (in summer, Board, and Committee) are *invited* to affirm the importance of these principles.

Our Beliefs:

It shouldn't be a surprise that within the LBC community, you'll find a diversity of views, perspectives and backgrounds. We all come from different places and with different experiences that inform how and what we believe. We have encountered God (some might prefer to us *The Holy, Spirit or Sacred*) in a variety of ways and at LBC we celebrate the chance to learn from one another.

As part of the United Church of Canada, we do not define our faith with a single list required beliefs, and so to get a really good sense of the diversity of belief at LBC, you'd need to pay attention to the songs we sing, the stories we share (some will come from the Bible, some from other Religious or Spiritual Traditions), the prayers we offer (in the dining hall before meals, or around the campfire at the end of each day to name a few), and also the way we endeavor to treat one another, and the respect we seek to show the earth.

While no one list of beliefs defines us, we certainly do resonate with the United Church's most recent articulations of faith – **A New Creed** and **A Song of Faith** (see appendix).

In addition we strongly affirm:

- That faith exploration is not simply a cerebral/intellectual experience but is to be embodied in story, song, activity, arts, and exploration of nature.
- That while each day at camp includes set aside time for reflection and spiritual exploration, that faith is to be integrated, explored, and developed in all aspects of camp life and that informal moments of discussion and reflection are often more impactful than official spiritual exploration activities.
- The Value of the stories, traditions, practices, and spiritual journeys of other faiths.
- That core to our exploration of Faith is a welcome and affirmation of all ethnicities, races, gender identities, and sexual orientations.
- That children and youth are not 'church of tomorrow' but have unique gifts and insights and are invited into spiritual leadership right now (not simply in preparation for adulthood).
- That our interaction with the earth is central to our exploration of faith

- The exploration of Faith for youth, and others, may lead to doubt. Doubt or dis-belief is welcome, and will never be treated with ridicule or coercion.

Our Staff:

While there is no requirement that Staff Members of LBC be part of the United Church of Canada, or hold any particular spiritual beliefs, we do expect that all Staff affirm the importance of creating space for Faith Exploration for our campers and seek to find the ways most appropriate for themselves to facilitate this important goal of the camp.

Regardless of personal spiritual perspective Staff of LBC are trained, equipped, and tasked to become part of the explicit and integrated elements of Faith exploration at camp which include:

- Active participation in designated times of Faith Formation (Morning Watch, SCT, Vespers). Offering formal and informal leadership.
 - o Formal Leadership might look like offering a prayer/reflection for morning watch, leading songs at SCT, or facilitating a nightly end of night prayer for a cabin group.
 - o A major aspect of Formal Leadership is the commitment to take thoughtful and intentional time to plan Vespers services when assigned.
 - o Informal leadership includes setting an example of engaged participation in SCT and Vespers when not directly leading or facilitating a smaller group discussion within an SCT time or providing space for campers to discuss lingering questions later in the day.
- Openness to engaging in spiritual discussions and questioning with campers, sharing their own perspectives and questions in ways that seek to continue, open up, and deepen exploration – consciously seeking never to be limiting or shutting down.

Appendix

1. A New Creed – Originally Adopted in 1968, revised in 1994

<http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/creed>

2. A Song of Faith – Adopted in 2006

<http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/statements/songfaith>