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www.CampBethelVirginia.org



2026 Bring-Your-Big Camp Confirmation Packet

Dear Camper and Parent,

Thank you for registering for Bring-Your-Big Camp at Camp Bethel! Your spots are confirmed, and we are excited to see you!

Please arrive at Camp Bethel at or before 5:00pm Friday. Check-in begins promptly at 5:00pm inside the Deer Field Gym with important announcements you need to hear. Park in the Ark Parking Lot or in the Deer Field grass lot. Leave your luggage in your car. Always accompany your camper during check-in. The Trading Post (camp store) will be set up inside the Gym from 4:45 through check-in. After check-in, you will drive your camper and your luggage to your cabin or lodge to move in. Your car can stay at your cabin/lodge, or you can park in the paved Ark Parking Lot, but please move your car out of the grass Deer Field after check-in. Once you are moved in, walk with your camper to meet your counselors at the lawn beside the Ark Dining Hall. Dinner will be served at 6:00pm Friday at the Ark Dining Hall. See detailed check-in instructions on page4 of this packet.

Following a closing celebration at 2:30pm on Saturday, the pool will be open until 4:00pm for all campers and parents. The Trading Post will be open on Saturday from 2:30-3:15pm for families to shop together.

This packet includes important "**Preparations for Your Time at Camp**" with your packing list, "The 7 Camp Rules," information about your time at camp, behavioral expectations, health and safety preparations, and detailed check-in procedures. *Write your name on or label every item you bring to camp.* Please consider donating toward our Wish List (page 2) and our Summer Offering Project (page 4). Carefully read all the enclosed information. If you owe any fee for your camp, please pay prior to check-in on your Campwise account.

Since you will be responsible for your child's care during your time at camp, we do not distribute medications or provide basic first aid care. Parents can use your phones during camp for photos, alarm clock, and emergency communications, but please be fully present with your child and the counselors. Please don't receive or make unnecessary calls. Make the most of your time together!

Camp keeps getting better, and we have an active, on-the-go program planned. Please encourage your friends and classmates to register for summer camp at Camp Bethel in Fincastle, VA! If you have questions, contact us at 540-992-2940 or CampBethelOffice@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you at camp!

Together, in Christ our hope,

Kathleen, Elizabeth, Mickey, Ben, Hannah and the Summer Staff of Camp Bethel

PREPARATIONS FOR YOUR TIME AT CAMP

1. What to pack: Gear list
2. Hygiene rules to teach your camper
3. Camp rules and policies
4. Goals and Outcomes for your time at camp
5. Preparing for camp living
6. Trading Post
7. Summer Offering: Food Pantry
8. Summer Curriculum
9. Friday check-in procedures

#1: What to pack: Overnight Camper's Gear List

Write your name on ALL items and bags! Pack lightly so you can easily carry all gear by yourself. You will be sleeping in a bunk bed, and your gear space is limited. Cabins are air-conditioned; prepare for hot days and cool nights. Keep your packing simple and minimal. SHARE supplies with a camp friend (shampoo, sunscreen, etc.); anything to reduce your gear load!

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack or daypack for daily use on hikes, around camp, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag or blanket/sheets for cabin bunk. <input type="checkbox"/> Pillow for cabin bunk. <input type="checkbox"/> Bath towel & washcloth and a pool/beach towel. <input type="checkbox"/> Swimsuit or swimming clothes appropriate for active play in the pool, for creek play, and active water games. <input type="checkbox"/> Bathroom supplies: toothbrush/paste; shower soap; etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing, light jacket; and sleepwear; <i>Hot days, cool nights.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Everyday dry shoes (closed-toe active shoes for running, hiking, games, climbing wall). <input type="checkbox"/> Strap-on sandals (w/ heel-strap) or water shoes to get wet for creek play, rain hikes, pool; <u>NO flip-flops.</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Large plastic bag or laundry bag for dirty clothes & wet shoes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rain jacket or poncho with hood; no stopping for rain! <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle: quart-sized, non-glass, screw-top. <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight or headlamp & extra batteries. <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen (waterproof and at least 30 SPF) and bug spray. <input type="checkbox"/> Summer offering to be turned in at check-in (checks to "Camp Bethel Summer Offering"), or donate at CampBethelVirginia.org/donate |
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Optional to bring:

- Hat or bandana
- Watch Shower caddy/bag
- Camera/GoPro Bible, notebook
- Goggles and/or swimming ear plugs
- Swim floaties or lifejacket for non-swimmers

Camp Bethel provides all necessary program, camping, first aid & safety gear.

Please consider donating new and gently used supplies. We ALWAYS need items listed in the Gear List above and items on our Wish List: 15-passenger van (2015 or newer); Outdoor Storage Shed (used or new); window air conditioning units, cleaning supplies, first aid supplies Amazon wish-list at <https://a.co/5qG5JYq> or CampBethelVirginia.org/donate. *Tax-deductible!*

Things **NOT** to bring:

- electronics, video games, toys, pets, skateboard
- vapes, tobacco/nicotine products, alcohol, drugs, cannabis, CBD products, smoking/vaping/drug paraphernalia
- weapons, knife, fireworks, matches, lighter
- clothing with inappropriate language/images or that is too revealing including short-shorts, string bikinis, or speedos
- food, drinks, candy, snacks, gum
- cologne, perfume, scented products, hairspray, because these attract biting insects AND many persons have allergies to scented products
- flip-flops

#2: Hygiene Rules to Teach Your Camper:

1. Tell your counselor if you feel sick.
2. Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and then throw the tissue away and wash your hands.
3. Wash your hands with soap and water after bathrooms, coughing and sneezing, or touching your face. Use hand sanitizer if you cannot wash your hands.

#3: Camp Rules and Policies:

The 7 Camp Rules to teach your camper

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be kind and be helpful. 2. Stay with your Unit. 3. Follow your Counselor's lead. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. No rough play. 5. Wear shoes always (except bed, shower, pool). | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Do not throw or kick anything. 7. Walk on paths, pavement, or gravel. |
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Safe Behavior Requirement

By requesting enrollment into Camp Bethel programs, you and your camper agree to our Behavior Policy and understand that safe behavior is required. Your camper will be with other children/youth and their counselors all day each day. We stay together with our group during our entire time at camp. **Unsafe behavior does not fit and cannot be tolerated.** Behavior deemed dangerous, inappropriate, intolerable, detrimental to the group, or unmanageable by the counselors or directors is grounds for dismissal from camp. Examples include not following the camp rules; hurting others (verbally, physically, or emotionally); possession of prohibited or harmful item; constant misbehavior; unsafe behavior; straying from your group; etc. The Program Coordinator will call parents/guardians as needed. Should it become necessary for your child to return home because of unmanageable behavior, homesickness or other reason, you agree to accept the Program Coordinator's decision and arrange for transportation.

Policy for Cancellations, Late Arrivals, Early Departure:

Should you pay for camp, and later decide to keep your child home, YOU HAVE OPTIONS:

1. Credit your payments toward another available, current-summer program, or
 2. Credit all but \$50 of your payments to next summer's pre-registration, or
 3. Donate part or all to help Camp Bethel enhance how we operate, or
 4. Refund all your payments minus your \$50 deposit. We just need to hear from you at least 24 hours prior to the start of your camp, and sooner if possible. Please notify the camp office 540-992-2940 or CampBethelOffice@gmail.com ASAP if your camper will not attend this session.
- Late arrival and early departure are discouraged but allowed if needed. However, because staff, food, and supplies are already secured, we cannot provide pro-rated refunds for partial camp attendance once your camper has arrived unless Camp Bethel cancels your child's program. If programs are cancelled, you will be notified ASAP of your options, including full refunds.

Camper Medications

Since you will be responsible for your child's care during your time at camp, we do not administer medications or provide basic first aid care. Please be safe and careful with storage and dosage of any medications.

Caring for Campers

We take the safety and care of your children (our campers) very seriously. Allowing us to care for your child is perhaps the greatest act of trust a parent can engage in. That makes Camp Bethel not just a fun place, but also a *sacred one*. We do everything we can to honor your trust, including our voluntary adherence to over 300 standards of health, safety, staffing, and programming. We know we cannot do this without our excellent counselors who, by joining our summer staff community, are trained and committed to providing a safe and fun week of learning and growth. If a camper is sad or if there is an issue, illness, injury, or emergency the Program Coordinator WILL contact parents.

#4: Goals and outcomes for your time at camp

Camp Bethel's WHY is RELATIONSHIPS. Our mission is "to foster and build RELATIONSHIPS with God, each other, and Creation.

Camp Bethel's HOW is TOGETHER in the ministry of relationship. A culmination of 98 years of ministry at Camp Bethel and over 65 years of small group camping philosophy, centered on what it means to be a part of the Body of Christ as described in 1 Corinthians 12.

1. Small Group Emphasis: 10-12 campers + 2-4 counselors combine to make a Unit, or group. Even while individually caring for each camper, the main focus of all activities and camp structure is the group we call a "Unit." The Unit does "everything" together all week, and there is no unsupervised free time. This high supervision guarantees camper safety with a very low rate of accidents. Counselors lead cooperative team-building games rather than competitive games, and counselors use language and plan activities that intentionally facilitate group building. Campers develop significant relationships with mature Christian counselors and with one another.
2. Sanctity of the Small Group: Each unit (group) plans their week together on the Program Board, and units are not disturbed in their "body-building" process. Units only interact with other units at appropriate times and places such as meals, worship, pool, and all-camp events.
3. Experiential Christian Education: More time is spent living and doing things together as Christians than is spent listening to lecture. Christian truths are learned through the relationships that form during a week of activities together, supported by Bible study and worship. Christian camping's role in the total life of each camper is INTRODUCTION to Christian living, not indoctrination or conversion. "Show them a light so lovely that they wish to know the source."
4. Emphasis on stewardship of God's creative Earth: We hold camp in "a place apart" (instead of a city street) because immersion into a "wilderness" setting invites openness to risk and self-examination. This, in turn, creates a rich atmosphere for new relationships (with God, with others, with creation). Both nature study and Bible study are forms of God's revelation of love. We do things at camp you CAN'T do in other settings. We have 470 acres of forests, fields, ponds, creeks, trails, and hills... and we use them! Counselors facilitate unstructured play time interacting with God's creative Earth, and as often as possible, activities are held out-of-doors and immersed in nature.
5. The Small Group's Dynamics and Make-up: The process of Relationship: The foundation of the summer camp is the group. Throughout the summer, in addition to the attention we give to the individual camper, our focus is continually on the "family unit" living as the Body of Christ. Behavioral Psychologist Dr. Bruce Tuckman describes five stages in the progression of small group development:
 - a. Forming: individuals become a group (1st night and 1st few days).
 - b. Norming: group interactions take on patterns, styles, codes and "norms."
 - c. Storming: Not necessarily conflict so much as exposure and openness. Any group difficulties eventually come out into the open; needed for true relationship.
 - d. Performing: problems are confronted; group realizes their potential; functions as the Body of Christ.
 - e. Reforming/Adjourning: preparations/discussions before returning to the "real" world.
6. Progression of Programs: Each age level offers a new activities and more exciting programs; age-group efficacy and target marketing. Adventure camps, skills camps, and trip camps encourage future participation in the Camp Bethel community. (No trust = no beginning. No fun = no return. No challenge = no continuation.)
7. Family-Style Meals and Cook-Out Program: Meals aren't just a "get-'em-in, feed 'em, get-'em-out" time; meals are a major part of the Experiential Christian Education for each camper. Christ is the head of each round table in the Dining Hall. Counselors teach family style meal manners, values, and expectations, plus how to set tables and host meals.
8. Camping (to camp) implies action: We believe there should be EFFORT required at camp to provide for one's daily needs (food, shelter, clean bathrooms, set tables, etc.). When we work together providing for others, a deeper sense of our own creativity emerges. We experience the closeness of living with and caring for ourselves and others, analogous to the community of early Christians described in Acts 2 and 1st Corinthians 12.

Camp Bethel's WHAT is everything else. Bible curriculum and Bible studies, worship and music, activities, meals, experiences, adventures, crafts, etc.

#5: Preparing for camp living away from home

Good parent preparation can give campers the knowledge they need to fully succeed during their camp week.

Physical expectations of living in a cabin:

1. No bathtubs here, only individual showers. Before camp, teach your younger camper how to take a shower.
2. We have several bathrooms around main camp. Remember, you can ask your counselor to use the bathroom ANY TIME. Hikes on camp property often venture away from bathrooms, so remember to "go" before you go; counselors will also remind you.
3. Living in a cabin or bunkroom with other people (same gender) may challenge our need for individual privacy, especially when changing clothes. We discourage nudity or disrobing directly in front of others. All cabins and bunkrooms have access to private changing areas. In a pinch, teach your child the "sleeping bag" clothes-changing method.
4. We walk everywhere, and we're on-the-go most of each day. Comfortable (dry) shoes & socks are very important. Take good care of your feet and prepare for a highly active program.
5. On hot summer days it's important to drink lots of water and apply sunscreen. Pack your water bottle: quart-sized, non-glass, screw-top, and remember to hydrate often and apply sunscreen 20 minutes before outdoor activity. Cabins have window-unit air-conditioners if needed on the hottest days/nights.

Social/Behavioral/Spiritual expectations:

1. You will be with other campers and your counselors all day each day. We stay together with our group during our entire time at camp, so we have little to no "alone time." Unsafe behavior does not fit and cannot be tolerated.
2. Group living: We'll experience all our daily activities **together** as a Unit, including our daily group duty and eating meals together.
3. Make new friends: Even if you come with a cabin-mate, you are expected to be friendly, courteous and helpful to others in the group. Cabins are single gender, but Units are co-ed unless we need to create an all-male OR an all-female group because one gender of campers registers more than the other. You will share your group with youth of different backgrounds and abilities. We believe Jesus' message of love and unconditional acceptance, and at camp, "Love your neighbor" is part of daily living.
4. You **MUST** learn and follow the Camp Rules and Hygiene Rules (page 2) to ensure a safe and fun week. Most of each day is active and boisterous. Also, there are times and events during the day when we're expected to listen and participate calmly and quietly, (Bible study/worship, meals/announcements, counselor explaining an activity, bed/quiet hours).
5. Try new things: Camp is a great place to taste different foods, sing different songs, try and practice new skills, play new games, and grow in our relationships with God, with each other, and with Creation.

#6: Trading Post camp store open Saturday 2:30-3:15pm

Parents can shop with campers from 4:45-5:00pm in the Gym prior to check-in and 2:30-3:15pm in the actual Trading Post store on Saturday after dismissal. T-shirts, water bottles, Camp Bethel-made apple butter, blankets, croc charms and more can be found in the store. Earnings directly support the programs of Camp Bethel.

#7: Summer Offering 2026: Botetourt Food Pantry

St. Mark's Episcopal church houses and staffs the major outreach ministry, the Botetourt Food Pantry with the help of other area churches, organizations and schools who assist with the distribution. The pantry was created over 40 years ago and now serves over 500 people per month. The pantry relies heavily on community support and donation to address food insecurity in Botetourt County. Learn more at <https://www.stmarksfincastle.org/info/botetourt-food-pantry.cfm>.

We will be collecting financial AND non-perishable food donations. Please donate only in-date, non-perishable foods that can be used by the shelter. Donations will be collected at check-in and check-out.

#8: Summer Curriculum: In the Wilderness

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

#9: Friday Check-In Procedures

1. Check-in begins promptly for everyone at 5:00pm Friday inside the Deer Field Gym with important announcements and introductions for all families. Arrive at or before 5:00! Registration does not begin until 5:00; cabin entry is not allowed until you check-in. The Trading Post Outlet (camp store) will be set up inside the Gym from 4:45 through check-in. Park in the paved Ark parking lot or in the grass Deer Field lot beside the Gym. Follow directional signs.
2. **Don't unload your luggage yet.** We'll give you your cabin assignment during check-in in the Gym. After you check-in, parents and campers will move luggage into their cabin.
3. Proceed to the check-in tables in the Deer Field Gym (there may be a line). Check in with the registrar and turn in offering donations to the offering box near the registration table.
4. Our staff will then give you a packet and site map with highlighted directions to your assigned cabin or lodge. Drive your luggage to the cabin or lodge, move in, and help your camper make their bed and get settled/arranged. Counselors will be waiting for you in the cabin.
5. You may leave your car near your cabin/lodge OR you can drive back with your camper to the paved Ark Parking Lot or Heritage Parking Lot, but please move your car out of the grass Deer Field after check-in.

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