



328 Bethel Road, Fincastle, Virginia 24090

phone: 540-992-2940

CampBethelOffice@gmail.com

www.CampBethelVirginia.org



2026 River Adventure Program Trip Confirmation Packet

Dear Camper and Parent,

Thank you for registering for the River Adventure Trip, June 14-19! Your spot is confirmed, and we are excited to see you!

Arrive at Camp Bethel at or before 4:00pm, Sunday. Check-in begins promptly at 4:00pm 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 and **leave your luggage in the car. Please see your parent letter for more details about check-in and your luggage.** Parents must accompany their camper through check-in and meeting their group's counselors. The Trading Post (camp store) will be set up inside the Gym from 3:45 through check-in. See detailed check-in instructions on page 8 of this packet. Dinner will be served to campers at 5:30pm on Sunday.

Our "on-river" days are led by trained adult volunteers and expert paddler Beth Wiegandt, plus your Camp Bethel Adventure Counselors. No prior canoe experience is necessary; however, you will enjoy your experience most if you are aware of the following expectations:

1. We require that our participants be competent swimmers. Each camper must pass a swim test upon arrival at Camp Bethel.
2. We simply cannot tolerate misbehavior or refusal to participate and help with daily work tasks. If leaders/counselors deem your behavior unsafe or unmanageable, we will cancel your camp participation. See the enclosed "Camp Rules and Policies."
3. Our activities will have some strenuous moments that will be physically demanding and you should expect the following:
 - a. Using primitive campsites during our River Trip (riverside campouts) with no running water or bathrooms. We'll teach you how to maintain hygiene and health at our campsites.
 - b. To participate fully, you must wear shoes at all times and wear your lifejacket whenever you are in or near the water.
 - c. Daily tasks: In addition to carrying your own personal gear, you will help carry group gear for short distances, kneel and/or sit in a canoe for 5-8 hours daily, and learn how to work with your partner to move your canoe through the water.
 - d. All participants **MUST** pack all the required gear from the packing list provided on pages 4-5. Without proper gear, you risk injury or not being able to perform. For example, not having proper rain gear might lead to mild hypothermia, and improper footgear could cause blisters or cuts on the foot. These problems may lead to evacuation of the participant.
 - e. In an emergency, leaders follow established wilderness procedures of evaluation, treatment and evacuation as necessary.

Pick up time and camper dismissal is 6:30pm Friday at the Ark Dining Hall. Watch for a Thursday email with any updates and announcements. Park in the paved Ark Parking Lot or the grass Deer Field beside the Gym. **Parents are encouraged to arrive at exactly 6:00pm for our Closing Singing and Celebration from 6:00-6:30.** This is an important and meaningful ceremony for your camper and their group, so we will not dismiss campers until after our final prayer at 6:30pm. Your camper will have eaten Friday dinner with their unit prior to 6:00, and we encourage you to come witness the singing. After 6:30 dismissal, **please walk** with your camper to pick up their luggage. The Trading Post store by the Ark parking lot is open Friday 6:30-7:15pm. See page 5 for detailed check-out procedures.

This packet includes important "**Preparations for Your Time at Camp**" with your packing list, Camp Rules, behavioral expectations, health and safety preparations, and detailed check-in procedures. Please consider donating toward our Wish List (page 3) and our Summer Offering Project (page 8). Carefully read all the enclosed information.

Your CampWise registration includes all your forms needed for check-in. If any changes occur in your child's health or situation, please update forms accordingly. Please complete all forms on CampWise seven days before your camp begins. If your payment includes Good-as-Gold, scholarship request or any other payment differences, please reach out to us for information!

Send mail to your camper (their name, c/o Camp Bethel and our address) several days before camp begins to ensure contact; or leave a pack of letters addressed to your camper with check-in staff for daily delivery. You can also send daily e-mailed bunk notes through CampWise (see instructions on page 9). In case of extreme emergency during the camp week, contact our Camp Bethel office at 540-992-2940. After-hours, our answering machine message will prompt you to our on-call emergency staff number.

Subscribe to our eNews at CampBethelVirginia.org/subscribe. Camp keeps getting better, and we have an active, on-the-go week 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*

Letter from Trip Leader, Beth Wiegandt

River Adventure Summer 2026

Hello!

Welcome to the river trip! We are excited to be sharing 2 beautiful rivers and God's Creation with you in June!

We will spend 3 days and 2 nights away from Camp Bethel camping along the river. We leave Camp Bethel Monday morning and paddle and camp along the New River Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from Eggleston to Narrows, increasing paddling skills, leadership skills and rescue skills. Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday nights campers will be at Camp Bethel for lodging and meals on Wednesday dinner – Friday Dinner. Monday and Tuesday nights will be at a riverside campsite in either tents OR a **hammock campers bring with them.**

You can expect a call from one of the leaders a week before the trip to answer questions and check on gear. Please see the gear list provided – it is divided into river gear and in camp gear, so your camper will need 2 bags.

In the meantime, please contact us if you have additional questions. We look forward to seeing you on the river in June!

Details on what to pack are attached to this email for your convenience and to help you be prepared.

When you arrive at Camp on Sunday, please check in at the gym BUT KEEP YOUR GEAR IN YOUR VEHICLE. After check-in come with your gear to the pool. We will start with a swim test, so you should be dressed for the pool when you arrive. We will also check your river shoes, thermal base layers and rain gear at the pool.

In Christ,
Beth Wiegandt, Joe Harden, Jessica Gawor

Beth's email and phone: youroutdoorclassroom@gmail.com ; 540-556-2594

Joe's email and phone: jharden4570@gmail.com ; 540-420-4250

PREPARATIONS FOR YOUR TIME AT CAMP

1. Important Safety and Gear Information
2. What to pack: Gear list
3. Hygiene rules to teach your camper
4. Camp rules and policies
5. Goals and Outcomes for your time at camp
6. Preparing for camp living
7. Preventing homesickness
8. Trading Post
9. Summer Offering
10. Summer Curriculum
11. Sunday check-in procedures
12. Friday pick-up procedures
13. Safety in the van for Adventure outing
14. Communicating with your camper during the camp week

#1: Important Safety and Gear Information

Weather Readiness:

The very nature of our outdoor adventure means that we do not have immediate access to traditional shelter, only our tents. This being said, weather in Southwestern Virginia in early summer can be unpredictable and at times quite cold. Exposure to several days of wet cold weather can be dangerous. Without proper clothing, exposure to the elements can make hypothermia (lowered core body temperature) a serious threat. This is why our gear list is very specific.

- **Gear Specific to our River Trip:** Your pack list (enclosed on next page) is very important, including the following ***gear to be checked by Trip Leaders on arrival at Camp Bethel:**
- **Rain Gear:** Waterproof jacket and pants; must be vinyl, Gortex, or coated rubber. Jogging suits, windbreakers, ponchos, and other items that are merely water resistant ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE.
- **Long Underwear:** Must be made of polypropylene, Coolmax, 100% polyester, Capilene or Thermax. These materials, unlike cotton, keep you warm when wet. NO COTTON for this underwear.
- **Shoes:** Two pairs of shoes that lace up and can get wet are required. Shoes that are new, too small, or sandal-type may cause foot injuries and are not recommended. Socks are recommended for maximum comfort.
- **Hammocks:** Many participants enjoy using Hammocks instead of sleeping in a tent while on the river. This is an option, but not required. It is often helpful to bring a rain fly for your hammock as well.

Acquiring Gear:

Items you don't own such as sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and duffels may be borrowed or purchased inexpensively. The clothing and supplies listed on the enclosed gear list can be obtained at any number of retailers. Inexpensive: WalMart, Army & Navy, A&N stores. Premium: Outdoor Trails, Blue Ridge Outdoors, Sportsman's Warehouse, sporting goods stores. Online: CampMor, Sierra Trading Post, REI, L.L. Bean.

See Gear List below and on next page for details of what to bring and how to pack.

Safety while traveling to-and-from the river:

All vehicles used for transporting campers are equipped with a first aid kit and emergency accessories. All vehicles have seatbelts for each passenger, and we check vehicle safety conditions prior to transport. Counselors will carry health forms for all passengers and a cell phone for emergency communication.

Passengers (campers) are instructed in the following safety procedures prior to transporting:

1. Passengers will remain seated at all times with hands and arms inside vehicle.
2. Seatbelts will be fastened – one person per seatbelt.
3. Noise level will be such as to not distract the driver. There will be no disruptive behavior.
4. Passengers will enter and leave the vehicle under the direction of a staff member and/or driver. If the vehicle makes an emergency stop, passengers will follow directions of staff member and/or driver and use buddy system if leaving the vehicle.

The Directors of Camp Bethel have selected our Adventure sites and off-site projects based upon adherence to safety standards as outlined by the American Camp Association.

River Gear: All personal river gear must be packed in one military-style or **large duffel bag** lined with 1 large heavy duty trash bag which can be tied off. Space is limited in the canoe so please do not pack extras. **Duffel bags** must be heavy duty and able to contain all belongings to go on the river, including your sleeping bag. No back packs or any other type of bag will be allowed. Large Zip-Lock bags work well to compartmentalize your gear and facilitate frequent packing and unpacking. Dry-bags and river-bags are difficult to pack repeatedly and are not recommended for carrying river gear. If you're coming with a friend, consider sharing sunscreen, shampoo, etc. **Put your name on all items.**

#2: 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!

- | | |
|--|---|
| <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 swim 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 |
|--|---|

Optional to bring:

- Hat or bandana
- Watch Shower caddie/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

RIVER ADVENTURE PROGRAM GEAR LIST (river side camping)

•**River Gear for participants:** All personal river gear must be packed in one **small soft-sided bag** lined with 1 large heavy duty trash bag which can be tied off. Space is limited so please do not pack extras. **Bags** must be heavy duty and able to contain all belongings to go on the river, including your sleeping bag. No back packs or any other type of bag will be allowed. Large Zip-Lock bags work well to compartmentalize your gear and facilitate frequent packing and unpacking. Dry-bags and river-bags are difficult to pack repeatedly and are not recommended for carrying river gear.

YOU MUST HAVE for River Bag

2-3 Tee shirts/Quick Dry Shirts	1 comb/brush
2 pairs underwear	1 toothbrush and toothpaste
1 long sleeved shirt	1 flashlight with extra batteries
1 sun hat	1 canteen or water bottle (available at trading post)
1-2 bathing suits (2 piece for females)	1 sunscreen (SPF 30+)
1 pair shorts for after paddling	1 sunglasses (must have head strap)
1 synthetic long underwear (top & bottom)	deodorant (no spray cans)
	quick dry camp towel
2 pairs of good fitting shoes which lace up and can get wet.	
2 pairs of socks to wear in shoes to avoid blisters (wet feet get soft)	
1 long pants (recommend fast dry material)	
1 rain suit, jacket and pants (waterproof, not just resistant-NO PONCHOS)	
1 soap/shampoo (Biodegradable, such as Ivory soap, Campsuds, or Bronners)	
1 sleeping bag suitable for outdoor use (<u>must</u> fit inside your duffel in its own trash bag)	
4 or more additional plastic bags to organize your gear and keep wet, dirty clothes separate	

OPTIONAL STUFF for all participants

personal paddle	P.F.D. (personal flotation device) – we provide these
bandanna	pair of “in camp” shoes/crocs/adventure sandals
paddling gloves	
unbreakable mirror	writing pad and pen
chapstick	disposable waterproof camera
Hammock with straps and optional rainfly – our campsites allow for hammock sleeping	
insect repellent (no spray cans)	
sanitary napkins/tampons as needed	

•**Gear for Time Spent at Bethel:** You will need clothes for 2 days and 3 cool nights at Camp Bethel. Include a non-river towel, pool towel and shoes. Pack in a separate bag and label with your name. This gear will remain in camp while we are on the river. This insures you have dry clean clothes when we get back to camp.

Items you don't own such as sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and duffels may be borrowed or purchased inexpensively. Your Army-Navy store or its equivalent is a possible resource. There is no need for expensive gear and no room for extras.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE NOT ALLOWED

knives	firearms	fireworks	PHONES
tobacco in any form	alcohol	illegal drugs	
electronics	drinks/beverages	candy	
jeans for on the water	flip flops	ponchos	

DO NOT PACK PERSONAL MEDICATION. ALL MEDICATION, WITH INSTRUCTIONS, IS TO BE GIVEN TO THE CAMP STAFF IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL.

IMPORTANT GEAR/SAFETY INFORMATION

•Weather/Hypothermia Warning

The very nature of our outdoor adventure means that we do not have immediate access to traditional shelter. This being said, weather in Southwestern Virginia in early summer can be unpredictable and at times quite cold. Exposure to several days of wet cold weather can be dangerous. Without proper clothing, exposure to the elements can make hypothermia (lowered core body temperature) a serious threat.

*Rain Gear

Waterproof jacket and pants; must be vinyl, Gortex, or coated rubber. Jogging suits, windbreakers, ponchos, and other items that are merely water resistant ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE.

*Long Underwear

Must be made of polypropylene, Coolmax, 100% polyester, Capilene or Thermax. These materials, unlike cotton, keep you warm when wet. NO COTTON.

*Shoes

Two pairs of shoes that lace up and can get wet are required. Shoes that are new, too small, or sandal-type will cause foot injuries and are not recommended. Socks are recommended for maximum foot comfort.

Hammocks

Many participants enjoy using Hammocks instead of sleeping in a tent while on the river. This is an option but not required. It is often helpful to bring a rain fly for your hammock as well.

•Purchasing Gear

The clothing and supplies listed can be obtained at any number of retailers. Inexpensive: Wal Mart, Kmart, Army & Navy, A&N stores. Premium: Blue Ridge Outdoors, Backcountry, Outdoor World, sporting goods stores. Online: Sierra Trading Post, REI, L.L. Bean.

*This gear will be checked on arrival at Camp Bethel

#3: 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.

Health protocols remain as common-sense practices: stay home if you're ill or recently exposed; hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; majority-outdoor activities; sanitizing high-touch surfaces; and symptom screening and testing at check-in, if needed. In the weeks before camp, monitor your child for any onset of symptoms and avoid people who are sick.

Parents should keep campers who are sick or symptomatic at home. Camper refunds (minus your deposit) are available in case of illness. You should NOT send an injured or sick camper to camp. Also ensure that your camper is free of headlice.

#4: Camp Rules and Policies

The 7 Camp Rules to teach your camper

1. Be kind and be helpful.
2. Stay with your Unit.
3. Follow your Counselor's lead.
4. No rough play.
5. Wear shoes always (except bed, shower, pool).
6. Do not throw or kick anything.
7. Walk on paths, pavement, or gravel.

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.

Camper Medications

If you send medication for your camper to take during the camp week, you must have correct information in your CampWise account. All medications must be given to our Medical Staff at Check-In on the first day of camp. All medications are stored and dispensed by the Health Coordinator unless special arrangements are made through the Health Coordinator and Camp Director. Send exactly enough medication for the camper's time at camp. **Medication MUST be in the original, labeled packaging and container naming prescribing physician, camper name, medication name, dosage, and frequency.** Place all this into a gallon zip-lock bag (or a box if more space is needed) with camper's name on it to speed the check-in process.

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.

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.

No Camper Cell Phones or Gadgets: A matter of TRUST

Aside from the fact that phones and gadgets are expensive, can get lost, and the physical camp environment is rough for such items, the main reason we don't allow campers to have phones/gadgets is TRUST. We TRUST that campers who come to camp WANT to be here and choose to temporarily disconnect from their constant phone/internet communications in order to be FULLY present with us at camp. When children/youth come to camp they (and you) are making a leap of faith, temporarily transferring their primary TRUST from their parents to their counselors. This is a growth-producing, yet challenging aspect of camp. As children/youth learn to TRUST other caring adults, they grow and learn, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges. *This emerging independence is one of the greatest benefits of camp!* (AND, there's ample research proving that youth greatly improve their social and emotional growth while phone-free!) Let your child/youth know that they can always reach out to their counselor and camp leaders. The Program Coordinator WILL contact you if your child/youth is experiencing a challenge while at camp, and the Camp Director WILL contact families in case of any emergency. Counselors do carry charged phones in their backpacks as tools for emergency use if needed. We encourage bringing an inexpensive digital camera to camp, but you may NOT bring a "connected/serviced" phone to use as your camera. Thanks, and also read #13 "Communicating With Your Camper."

Emergency Preparedness and Parent Notification During the Camp Week

Using smart phones, our director and staff receive and communicate instant updates on summer storms or emergencies, and your counselors are trained for camper safety during storms and emergencies. In case of any emergency in which we request parent action, our office will contact you via e-mail and phone. Add CampBethelOffice@gmail.com to your contacts so our emails come to your inbox. Otherwise, **NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS**, and everyone is safe. In case of a family emergency that must be communicated to your camper, contact 540-992-2940 or e-mail CampBethelOffice@gmail.com. For after-hours emergency call 540-992-2940 and our answering machine message will prompt you to our on-call staff number.

Visitation is NOT allowed during camp week

DO NOT arrive at camp unexpectedly! Our site is closed to visitors/guests during camper weeks. While supervising campers, all staff are trained to stop and question anyone they don't recognize on site. If you need to visit camp prior to the official pick-up time (see "Pick-Up Procedures"), you must call ahead AND check in and wait at the camp office when you arrive.

#5: 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.

#6: Preparing for camp living away from home

Each counselor is trained to help guide your group safely and successfully through each camp day. Also, 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 9 other people (same gender) may challenge our need for individual privacy, especially when changing clothes. We prohibit 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 used for years by most children.
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 week.
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.

#7: Preventing homesickness

Good parent preparation is essential to give campers the confidence needed to fully enjoy a camp experience:

1. Set realistic expectations for the camp experience based on our information and the activities listed in the program descriptions online. Reinforce positive camp aspects; encourage new learning.
2. In the weeks before camp, hold one or more "practice" overnight sleepovers in another room of your home with your child.
3. With your child, come and visit Camp Bethel. Call us to arrange a self-guided pre-tour.
4. Don't force a child to camp if they have no desire to go. Only send a willing & ready child to back-to-back camps.
5. Don't tell campers how much you will miss them. Instead encourage new friends and new experiences.
6. Don't tell campers they can call home. Instead, encourage your camper to talk to their counselor if they are sad. If a camper is sad or if there is an issue, injury, illness or emergency the Program Coordinator WILL contact parents.

Camp Bethel will never force a camper to stay at camp who does not want to stay.

Our counselors are thoroughly trained in methods to prevent homesickness, and our program style keeps campers active and engaged in camp activities and interpersonal relationships. If, however, your child becomes homesick:

1. All staff will do everything possible to address the cause and to encourage the camper.
2. If symptoms persist, the Program Coordinator will call home to discuss options before you speak with your child.
3. If all determine the best option is to pick up your child, we will have the camper ready. There are no refunds for campers who leave early, because staff, food and gear are already secured.

#8: Trading Post camp store open Sunday 3:45-4:30pm (in Gym) & Friday 6:30-7:15pm (in Store)

Parents can shop with campers from 3:45-4:30pm on Sunday in the Gym prior to check-in and 6:30-7:15pm in the actual Trading Post store on Friday 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. At the Trading Post (Sunday 3:45-4:30 in Gym & Friday 6:30-7:15 in store) lock in this year's rate for next year's camp and get 1 FREE short sleeve tee-shirt by using our "Early Summer Pre-Registration Form."

#9: 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.

#10: 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.

#11: Sunday Check-In Procedures

1. Check-in begins promptly for everyone at 4:00pm Sunday inside the Deer Field Gym with important announcements and introductions for all families. Arrive at or before 4:00! Registration does not begin until 4:00; cabin entry is not allowed without your counselors. The Trading Post Outlet (camp store) will be set up inside the Gym from 3:45 through check-in. Park in the paved Ark parking lot or in the grass Deer Field lot beside the Gym. Follow directional signs.
2. LUGGAGE: Leave your luggage inside the car. Campers will relocate to the pool for River Adventure Program orientation after check-in, and will drop their luggage there.
3. Please tag or label all luggage/gear with your name. We will have markers & tape available in the Gym. Please pack lightly enough so that the camper can easily carry all gear by herself/himself.
4. 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.
5. At the first check-in table you will find your Parent Info Card, organized alphabetically by camper last name. This page has (1) your Camper's Unit number, (2) your counselors' names, (3) your cabin/lodge, (4) Bunk Notes instructions, and (5) Friday pick-up procedures. You will use your Unit number to eventually find and meet your counselors and your group.
6. At the second check-in table, you will (1) turn in any adventure waivers or forms due (extra blank waivers and forms will be available), (2) update or add any names of adults who are authorized to drive the camper home from camp, and (3) answer a few quick Health Screening questions (fever? achy? sore throat? cold/flu symptoms?).
7. If you bring medications, you will then give any medication and any Health Form updates to our Health Coordinator. Place all medication in a gallon zip-lock bag with camper's name on it to speed along the registration process.
8. Parents and Campers will then walk to move to the pool: Take time to meet the counselors and other campers in the Unit. Tell the counselor any information they should know (in addition to the information you included on your Camper Information and Health Form). *Don't linger too long!* Say "Goodbye" as your campers begin a great week at camp with their counselors and new friends.
9. Parents: Drive slowly as you leave, watch for pedestrians, and follow exit signs out of camp.
10. These procedures were established (and revised) to ensure camper safety and supervision, to reduce vehicle traffic through camp, to ensure the security of staff and campers' belongings, and to begin group unity and cooperation as soon as possible after arrival. Thanks for understanding!

#12: Friday Camper Pick-Up Procedures: *(Watch for an end-of-week email with any updates and announcements.)*

1. Dismissal/Pick-up is Friday at 6:30pm at the Ark Dining Hall. Your camper will have eaten Friday dinner with their group prior to 6:00pm.
2. You are encouraged to arrive at 6:00pm at the Ark to witness our Closing Singing and Celebration from 6-6:30pm. This is an important and meaningful ceremony for your camper and their group, so we will not dismiss campers to your care until after our final prayer at 6:30pm.
3. Park in one of these areas: the paved Ark Parking Lot or the grass Deer Field beside the Gym. Bring your Photo ID. Meet campers and counselors at the pond side of the Ark Dining Hall.
4. To "claim" your child at 6:30pm, present your PHOTO ID or DRIVER'S LICENSE to your child's counselor. Only adults listed as authorized may pick-up the camper AND only with a valid photo ID or driver's license.
5. If you brought medication, your camper's medication containers will be stored in your camper's luggage along with a copy of their completed/initialed dosage form. Please ensure that your camper's medication and dosage form is in their luggage.
6. After 6:30 dismissal, please walk with your camper and their counselor to pick up their luggage.
7. Your counselors will double-check to ensure all your camper's belongings are out of the cabin and in your possession before you leave.
8. If you arrive after 6:30pm dismissal, park, go to the Ark Dining Hall, and ask a staff member for instructions where to pick up your child.
9. After 6:30pm dismissal, the Trading Post (in the actual camp store) will be open from 6:30-7:15pm. At the Trading Post from 6:30-7:15, lock in this year's rate for next year's camp (and immediately get a **free tee shirt!**) by taking advantage of our "Closing Day Pre-Registration Form." It's a great way to reserve your spot for next year and save \$10.
10. Parents: Drive slowly as you leave, 5 mph; watch for pedestrians; follow exit signs out of camp.

#13: Safety in the van for any Adventure outing

If your camp includes an offsite adventure, campers receive a safety orientation in preparation for travel. Please remind your camper to have safe behaviors while in the camp vehicles and offsite for the adventure. Vehicles used for transporting campers are equipped with a first aid kit and emergency accessories, seatbelts for each passenger, and we check vehicle safety conditions prior to transport. Counselors will carry health forms for all passengers and a cell phone for emergency communication.

The staff of Camp Bethel have selected our Adventure outfitters (those providing equipment, leadership and expertise) and off-site projects based upon their qualifications and their adherence to safety standards as outlined by the American Camp Association.

#14: Communicating with your camper during the camp week

Since phones/tablets are NOT allowed by campers at camp, here's how to keep in touch:

1. Provide your camper with a pack of home-addressed, stamped envelopes and a notepad.
2. Write and send your camper hand-written letters or postcards. Mail these 3 or 4 days before their camp week begins so they reach your camper while s/he is here. OR leave 5 pre-written dated notes for your camper.
3. Send your camper daily one-way e-mail through Campwise's paid e-mail service described below. All funds raised by one-way emails go directly to our Staff Adoption fund that allows our staff to receive an end-of-summer bonus.

TO GET STARTED TODAY with CampWise's secure and easy paid e-mail service:**SENDING EMAILS TO YOUR CAMPER:**

Step 1: Purchase your one-way email package on CampWise. Unlimited emails can be sent by you for just \$5. You can access this option through your CampWise account by clicking the "one way email" option.

Step 2: Submit your note **before 8:30am** for same-day delivery at lunch. All emails sent after that time will be delivered the following day.

Share with family members: All family members you invite can send notes to the address and have them delivered to your camper. Please know each member you have sending emails will be an additional \$5 charge.

BUNK NOTES F.A.Q.s:

Who do I call if I have questions or problems? Call CampWise at 866 433-4548. **Do NOT call the camp.**

Why do I have to pay for one-way emails? The CampWise system bundles and sorts the messages for us to easily print and distribute to campers. Your payment will help offset printing costs and will add to our Summer Staff Adoption fund.

Can other relatives use these services? Absolutely! All family members you invite can send notes to the address and have them delivered to your camper. Please know each member you have sending emails will be an additional \$5 charge.

FOLLOW CAMP BETHEL! *News! Photos! Video!* CampBethelVirginia.org/subscribe