

## Dear Parents,

We realize that your children are treasures. As a parent of three myself, I understand and feel the enormity of the responsibilities you entrust us with every week of the summer. Our goal each week is to protect the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of our campers. We desire Bethel to be a place where faith can flourish in all who attend.

Understanding this great responsibility, we train our counselors and staff to serve the campers with love and to foster an environment of growth and trust. The word 'Bethel' is Hebrew for 'House of God'. We teach our staff and campers that scary stories, sarcasm, put-downs, racism, vulgar language, violent behavior, and similar things have no place here at Bethel. We strive to create an environment where campers can let down their concerns regarding self-esteem and be loved for who they are. We love to see children who may have a hard time at school due to bullies enjoy a week of fun with children of their own age without the pain that being picked on can bring. Bethel is about your children coming to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and continuing to grow in their walk with Him. Because of this, we strive to continuously show Christ's love to our campers.

We train our staff every summer prior to the camper's arrival on how to recognize and prevent camp-related risks, and we also spend a considerable amount of time covering various situations they may encounter with campers during the summer. However, when it comes to helping your child have the best experience possible at Bethel, you as parents are vital to that success, and also our number one resource. You have the best insight into your child, so we are asking for help from you.

Please review all of the information provided in this packet. We have compiled frequently asked questions and helpful information that you, as a parent, should know as you prepare to send your child to Bethel.

In addition, please complete and return the Camper Health Form. It can be found on our website under the INFO / PARENT FORMS page. The Camper Health Form is kept confidential and is used by Bethel Healthcare Staff or professional medical personnel in the case of an emergency. Campers are not singled out, made to feel embarrassed, or treated differently because of information gathered from the Camper Health Form. Rather, the more we know ahead of time, the easier it is to help your child have a successful experience at camp.

Please be assured that should any situation with your child arise, be it severe homesickness, a behavioral issue, or a health concern, you will be contacted by us. We may even call you to seek your advice or insight into a particular situation. Our desire is to involve you in the process of your child having a successful and enjoyable week at camp.

I would like to encourage you to give us your thoughts and input about our summer camping programs. Your feedback is welcome. We want to hear from you about what we are doing right and the areas where we need improvement. If you ever have any questions or concerns about any aspect of our summer program please email me and I will be happy to get back to you.

Thank you again for blessing us by allowing us to spend a week with your child, showing them Christ's love and our love as well.

Sincerely,

Elisa Hill "aka Mama 'Lisa'"

*Elisa Hill*

Office Manager/Registrar  
Bethel Christian Camp and Retreat Center  
office@bethelchristiancamp.org



# Before Your Camp Week Starts

Post the Dates and Times of Check in and Pick-up somewhere to help you remember

## On Check-In Day (Drop-off)

### Before You leave home, make sure:

Your child's clothes are labeled and packed securely.

If there have been changes since you filled out the online Health Form please visit our PARENT FORMS page on our website, print and update the Camper Health Form and bring it with you.

Medications are in the original labeled containers and ready to turn in.

Please feed your campers prior to arrival as there will be no dinner served on Sunday evening.

### When You Arrive At Camp:

Camp check in is from 6 pm - 6:25 pm on Sunday evening. Please do not arrive before 5:30 as the staff are still preparing for campers.

Look for the traffic directors and join the line with your campers.

Check in with the Registrar.

If your camper will be taking any medication during their week at camp be sure to stop by the Health Care staff table to drop those off. Be sure to review the Health Form and turn in any medications (ALL campers must have a completed Health Form on file listing all medications they will be taking). If you have additional medications not listed with the registration please complete the Additional Medication form and bring it with the medication in its original container.

Drop your camper's luggage off in the appropriate trailer.

Walk your camper to their cabin to meet their counselor and help them get their bed set up.

Say goodbye and have a safe ride home... see you on Friday evening!

## When Camp Ends (Pick-Up)

**New This Summer!!! We will have our "Closing Program" on Friday at 6:00pm**

### When You Arrive At Camp:

Follow the traffic directors and join us in the amphitheater for the Bethel Review. Just a taste of what your campers have been doing all week and what they have been learning.

Be sure to have your unique pick up tag and present it for admittance to the amphitheater. If you have arranged for someone else to pick up your child please be sure to provide them with the tag.

Enjoy all of the tales and stories from your child's week at camp. Please feel free to contact us and let us know how your child's week at camp has affected their spiritual growth. We love to hear from parents! Thanks for sending your child to Bethel for a week.

# Common Questions

## **What time is Check-in? When does camp end?**

Residential Camp begins Sunday at 6 pm. We ask that parents arrive no later than 6:15 pm in order to streamline the registration process. **Residential camp ends on Friday at 6:00pm.** Parents are invited to attend the Bethel Review which begins at 6:00 pm where you can see a sample of what the campers have been learning and doing. We ask that parents arrive no earlier than 5:30.

## **Can I check-in early? Can I pick up my child earlier or later than the scheduled times?**

Prior to check-in time staff members are busy preparing for your child's week at camp. We ask that all campers arrive only during the scheduled times. If for any reason you will be arriving late the day that camp begins, please let us know in advance. There is no one in our office during registration, however, we do check the messages before giving away 'waiting list' slots. Failure to contact us could result in the loss of your child's space at camp.

Because early departures can be disruptive to your child and their Cabin group, understand that we can only accommodate alternative pick-up times in emergency situations. Please communicate with our office regarding an alternative pick-up time 803-926-5511.

Regarding late pick-ups, please understand that our staff have other responsibilities and duties related to the operation of Bethel which commence after camper pick-up. As such, we cannot provide care for campers after the scheduled pick-up time.

If you have arranged for someone else to pick up your child, please tell your child this and inform us at Check-in. Be sure that whoever is picking your child up has your unique pick up tag. Please inform us immediately if a situation arises unexpectedly which would prevent you from getting to the camp at the scheduled pick-up time.

## **Where will my child be staying? Do the cabins have bathrooms?**

Campers will be placed in cabins with other campers of the same gender and age group. Our cabins have bunk beds, electricity, and air-conditioning. Both the Boy's and Girl's cabins have their own bathrooms with toilets and showers.

## **Can my child and a friend be together in the same cabin?**

Yes. To be in the same cabin group as a friend, both parents must email their request to the registrar, [office@bethelchristiancamp.org](mailto:office@bethelchristiancamp.org) Campers' ages must be within a year of one another. While we cannot guarantee that every request will be filled, we will make every effort to do so.

## **Will you make exceptions to the listed age groups for camps?**

Experience has shown us that most kids are happier with others at their own peer level. For this reason, we break the cabin groups up by age and host several different weeks of camp to accommodate all ages. While we may be flexible (after a conversation with a parent) on a camper who is on the young side moving to an older program or cabin group, we will not accommodate requests for older campers to attend programs or be in cabin groups below their age groups.

## **Who will my child's counselor be?**

Everyone finds out who their Counselors will be at Check-in. The Christian men and women who make up our staff are often former campers, while others are recruited from local churches and colleges. All of our staff have gone through extensive training regarding their responsibilities and camp policies and procedures. If you would like to get a glimpse of the hiring process you can view a Staff Application from our SUMMER JOBS page on the Bethel website.

## **Is my child insured while at camp?**

Your medical insurance will be considered primary in case of an accident or injury. All children attending camp must have some form of Medical Insurance or be covered by Medicaid.

## **What's the camper-to-staff ratio?**

Our cabin groups will consist of 10 campers who are overseen by 2 staff. One of the 2 will be a Sr. Counselor, 18 years or older; the other will be a Jr. Counselor, 16 years or older. Also on site are Boys' and Girls' Head Counselors, Assistant Program Director, Program Director and Executive Director.

## **Can you accommodate campers with special dietary needs?**

We can accommodate certain common dietary needs (lactose intolerance, minor food allergies, etc), However, please have a discussion with us, in advance, by calling us regarding any special dietary needs. In addition, please note any special dietary needs on the Health Form. We do not recommend enrolling campers with severe peanut allergies due to the fact that we cannot guarantee that all foods served during the week will be peanut-free. Please also understand that we **do not offer a vegetarian** option at our meals. We strive to serve our campers healthy and delicious food; in addition, consumption of healthy and well-balanced portions are required for all our campers.

## **How do you handle Bedwetting?**

Our Staff are trained to handle bedwetting incidents with discretion and sensitivity. Our goal is for your child to have a positive experience during their week at camp without being singled out or made to feel embarrassed. We will discretely launder any soiled bed linens or sleeping bags during the day while the campers are going about their daily routines. To help us help your child, please list **Bedwetting** on your child's Health Form, and give us any recommendations you may have. In addition, please tell your child to inform their counselor or junior counselor first thing in the morning regarding any incident that may occur. Please also consider sending your child to camp with pull-ups (they are now common and available at most supermarkets for all-size children). Pull-ups can be worn discreetly and without the knowledge of other campers. If you do send your child to camp with pull-ups please inform your child's counselor so that they can ensure that the pull-ups are properly disposed of when necessary.

## **Should I send my child with special needs to summer camp?**

Our counselors generally do not have the special skills needed to work with mentally handicapped, or other children with special needs. In rare instances, exceptions can be made after we consult with the parents. It may also require a Doctor's Note clearing them for a full week of camp and the activities they will be involved in while here. Our desire is to see every child that comes to Bethel have the best experience possible. Please do not send a child with special needs to camp without first consulting with us.

## **Does my child need to bring any money?**

No, there is nothing to buy while at camp. Extra money will only be a possible loss. Please leave all money at home.

# **Communication With Your Child At Camp**

## **Should I write my child at Camp?**

Absolutely! Campers are always very excited to receive a letter from home. We encourage parents to write their children while they are at camp. It is even a great idea to put a letter in the mail a few days before camp starts so that your child receives mail early in their time away from home. Mail is distributed every day at lunch. To send your child a letter or package please use the following address:

**Camper Name**  
**% Bethel Christian Camp**  
**750 Boy Scout Rd**  
**Gaston, SC 29053**

## **Electronic Communication:**

Parents, we are excited to now offer Secure Photo albums along with Bunk Notes so that you can send email notes to your child while they are at camp. Go to **Bunk1.com**, create an account, and use our invite code. If you have registered and have not yet received an **invite code**, please contact our office **803-926-5511** or **office@bethelchristiancamp.org**. Prior to your child's week at camp, you will be given a passcode specifically for their week via email. This will allow you to view photos free of charge. There is a \$1 per Bunk Note Credit charge for sending Bunk Notes. This charge allows us to use the Secure Photo Service free of charge. Bunk Notes will be delivered once daily.

## **Can I send my child a care package?**

Care packages that do not contain candy or food are a great idea! We ask that you please do not have your child bring food or candy to camp or mail them food or candy while they are here. Food and candy only encourage Fire Ants to find their way into the cabins and other places where we do not want them. Campers are fed healthy and delicious meals every day and, in addition, they are given canteen (snack and drink) every evening. Please help us keep our cabins free of Fire Ants by not sending your child food or candy.

## **What are your policies regarding Telephone calls and Cell Phones?**

During a week of camp, we strive to build a sense of community within the camp and the cabin groups. One of the wonderful things about being at camp is that campers are able to get away from the distractions of the everyday world. It is our prayer that Bethel will be a place where children can connect to God through His word, relationships, nature, and activities. Camp is also a great time of self-discovery and testing out one's independence. Experience has shown us that allowing campers to have telephone contact with friends or family outside of camp detracts from the camp experience, is counterproductive to our mission and goals, disrupts our ability to build community at camp, and often breeds homesickness both in the camper and their cabin mates. A mildly homesick child usually becomes a very homesick child after a phone conversation and children who have no homesickness often suddenly develop it when they become aware that their cabin mate has a hidden cell phone or has been allowed to make or receive a phone call. For these reasons, we do not permit campers to make or receive phone calls or have cell phones. Please know that if a situation involving your child arises that warrants parental involvement, be it severe homesickness, a behavioral issue, or a healthcare concern, we will contact you. If you have an emergency and you need to contact your child, please call our office at (803) 926-5511. If you feel that your child is not yet ready to spend a week at camp without the ability to contact you by phone please consider giving them another year to mature.

## **Can I visit my child at camp?**

For many of the same reasons outlined above related to our policy on telephone calls, we strongly discourage visitors at camp during our short camp sessions. Parents stopping by to check on their children can be a very disruptive influence on, not only their child's time at camp, but also on the cabin as a whole. Simply put, children who are not homesick often become so when their parents visit them at camp and homesickness can be contagious. We ask parents, who need to drop something off for their child that they may have forgotten, to schedule that drop-off time with our office.

## **Can my child spend the night at home and get dropped off in the morning?**

For many of the same reasons that we do not allow visitations, we do not accommodate children going home in the evening. It is far too disruptive to camp life and can create homesickness in the cabin.

## **What do you do with Homesick kids?**

Most children at camp are excited to be part of what is happening and are often very sad to see the week end. However, we do occasionally have a camper who is Homesick. The best cure for homesickness is activity! The simple enjoyment found in our daily schedule is usually enough to turn around a homesick camper. If, however, a camper remains homesick we will contact you and apprise you of the situation. Just that phone call often cures a homesick camper. When we say to a homesick child **“This morning I spoke with your parents and told them about how you want to go home. They wanted me to tell you that they are very proud of you and they love you, but they want you to stick it out.”** that usually fixes the situation. Should the homesickness continue we will continue to keep you apprised of the situation and will make arrangements for you to pick your child up should you deem that necessary. We would strongly discourage parents from relaying this information to their children prior to

their week here. When a child feels that going home early is a possibility, that child is far more likely to get homesick than the child who believes that they must stick with it to the end.

## Tips for Parents

### 5 Ways To Avoid Setting Your Child Up For Failure

#### **Avoid making deals or using bribes**

For example, avoid saying “If you don't like it, we will come and pick you up” or “If you stay at camp for a whole week we'll get you a Playstation when you come home.” Children are short-sighted and will gladly give up a bribe for what they see as an immediate need on their part.

#### **Avoid statements or actions that conflict with camp policies**

For example, giving your children a cell phone and telling them to keep it hidden when Bethel has a policy that does not permit campers to call home or have cell phones.

#### **Avoid sending your child to camp during a disruptive home situation**

For example, in situations where a close friend or family member recently died. Give your child time to adjust. Check with us to see if it is possible to switch to a session later in the summer.

#### **Avoid keeping helpful information from camp staff about your child.**

For example, not letting staff know your child is prone to bedwetting is counterproductive. By providing our staff with as much information as possible you can help us help your child. Having information ahead of time allows us to be proactive in serving your child.

#### **Avoid taking your child off of prescription medications for their week at camp**

Camp is a less structured environment than your child may be used to at school. Children are more active and stay up later at camp. If your child requires medication while at home under normal circumstances, it is beneficial to them to remain on those medications and continue a routine their body's metabolism is familiar with. Their week at camp is NOT a good time to see if they can go without their normal medications.

### 5 Things You Can Do to Help Your Child Succeed At Camp, Especially If It Is Their First Time Away From Home

#### **Talk with your child about their concerns and what they are looking forward to.**

Acknowledge your child's concerns positively, and then acknowledge that you will miss them and that you are confident that they will be able to complete a week of camp.

#### **Discuss the camp's policies with your child beforehand**

Make sure that your child understands what Bethel's policies are and that they have to honor them.

#### **Pack together with your child**

Pack things your child will be comfortable wearing. Pack a flashlight with extra batteries. Pack a favorite stuffed animal. Please use the Packing list included on our PARENT FORMS page.

#### **Let your child know that the camp staff is there to help them.**

Make sure they understand that if they have any problems or concerns they should let their counselor know.

**Prepare your child for spending time away from home at camp.**

Visit the camp website and look at pictures and videos. Encourage your child to ask questions about camp. Practice being away from home overnight. Have a sleep-out in the backyard or at a relative's house.