



# CAMP MINISTRY



Created by the Association of Adventist Camp Professionals  
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

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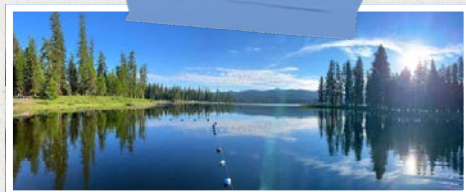
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# Is Camp Ministry Right For You?

Do you love being in the outdoors? Would you enjoy variety in your work? Do you find God's voice a bit clearer out in nature? Do you like sharing these experiences with others? Would you savor the opportunity of working with young people...campers and summer camp staff alike? Do you want to grow spiritually? Do you have talents or skills that would lend themselves to camp life and work? If so, a career in camp ministry may be for you.



# The Beginnings of Seventh-day Adventist Camping

Camp Ministry Professionals join the ranks of those who began camp ministry back in 1925. That is when W. J. Gilson directed the first Seventh-day Adventist summer camp held in December...wait...what, December? That's right. That first summer camp was held in Australia at Yarra Doon, near Warburton, in the Victorian Conference. Summer camp came to North America the following year. Grover Fattic led out in an all-boys summer camp at Townline Lake, Michigan, while Harriet Holt held one for girls in Wisconsin

## CAMP IDYLLWILD

The first summer camp held on church-owned property was in California at Camp Idyllwild in 1932. Since then, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has invested millions of dollars in more than sixty camps and retreat centers throughout North America, to say nothing about the dozens of camps the church has established around the world



# Why Camp Ministry?



## CAMP MINISTRY IS EVANGELISM

How? There are three ingredients to camp ministry that make it so effective in overall evangelism.

The first ingredient is that camp ministry happens in nature, the Creator's First Book, which is filled with endless illustrations of God's love, His care for us, and our role as the caretakers of His creation.

Second, Christian staff oversee the camp's ministry whether it is during summer camp or in the year-round operation.

Third, camp programming and activities ultimately provide opportunities to present the Living Savior.

Masterfully woven together, these three create a nurturing environment to reach people of all ages for Christ and promote physical, mental, and spiritual growth.

## THE BENEFITS & BLESSINGS TO CAMP MINISTRY PROFESSIONALS

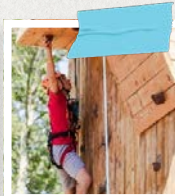
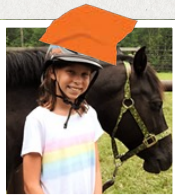
Yes, there are benefits and blessings to those who work, live and minister in camps. Let us count the ways: You get to work at camp. You get to work for and with Jesus. You get to see the Holy Spirit active in the lives of others. You get to



serve your camp's guests, no matter how humbling some of those services might be. You get to grow as you face new challenges. You get to become a part of the broader community in which your camp is located. You get to work side-by-side with the summer camp staff, mentoring and encouraging them.

## THE CHALLENGES IN CAMP MINISTRY

For some, a challenge could be that you might work with the same people day after day (which may or may not be a good thing). You will often find yourself working during the week and on weekends. Church attendance may be limited.



Trips to town to buy groceries may have to be an all-day affair. Some guests will complain...to you, even if there is nothing you can do about it. And you probably won't be able to take vacation during the prime times of the year. Work could become very monotonous...doing the same things repeatedly week after week...just to keep camp functioning. The camp may not have the money to do all that needs to be done. You may wish for extra help but have no budget or extra funding to hire anyone else. Challenges, yes; insurmountable, no.



# The Camp: Where It All Takes Place

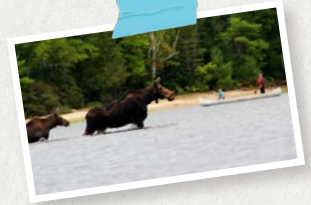


## LOCATION

Originally, camps were in more rural areas. Over time, civilization grew closer to some camps until they now are bordered by homes and communities. Many camps remain more remote, either because they are next to farmland, or they lease land from the Forest Service or are on church-owned property surrounded by government land such as a national forest or park.

## PROPERTY

**Acreage** – Adventist camps in North America comprise a total of more than 14,000 acres. Camps range from ten to a thousand acres in size.



**Setting** – Many camps are found on or near water...lakes, streams, ponds, rivers, or creeks. Vegetation varies from deciduous forests to evergreens, and from farmland to cacti.

**Wildlife** – If the camp is in or near the woodlands, camp visitors could include bear, deer, mountain lions, rabbits, and raccoons. Some camps are on migratory routes of birds, too.





**Climate** – This will vary depending on the location of the camp. Some camps have a lot of winter snow, while others are in a milder climate.

**Capacity** – A few camps, like those in Alaska, can accommodate fifty or so campers and staff during a week of summer camp while some year-round camps and retreat centers can hold upwards of five hundred guests or more.

## AMENITIES

Camps will have lodging facilities that might include rustic cabins, RV or tent camping, dormitory-style rooms, or hotel-like accommodations. Year-round camps will often have food service available, too, along with meeting rooms, outdoor chapel, campfire bowl, and gymnasium.



## ATTRACTIONS

These could include archery, go-carts, horseback rides, canoeing, swimming, nature trails, petting zoo, nature center, telescope, historical landmarks, volleyball, soccer, basketball, miniature golf, zip-lines, challenge course elements, climbing wall, disc golf, and more.



## CAMPS AROUND THE WORLD

Nearly every country in the world has some sort of camp ministry. They may not all look alike. But they all are committed to the value of camp ministry in advancing the Kingdom of God.

# The Ministry: How It All Takes Place

## SUMMER CAMP

Ministry is the single, most important reason why the Adventist Church has camps today. Overwhelmingly, families see the value of a summer camp experience for their children. Many make a life-long commitment to Jesus at camp, some choosing to be baptized the camp's lake or pool.



How does that happen? Simple...the summer camp experience is a Christ-centered environment which promotes proper social, physical, mental, and spiritual development. Campers develop a sense of responsibility and independence, while being nurtured by caring college-age counselors and staff. The morning Camp Council is filled with inspiring spiritual lessons, while singing lends a joyful tune to carry one through the day. The activities provide times of exercise, a sharpening one's skills, or trying something new and challenging. Campers learn to live and work together and build relationships that last a lifetime...and beyond.





Summer camp is also a significant training ground for young adult staff to become active in Christ's service. Working at camp, especially for several seasons, has proven to be a significant retention factor for young adults remaining active in the church at large.

## SEASONAL & YEAR-ROUND CAMP

Through the years, a lot of camps have expanded their ministry into a multi-seasonal or year-round ministry. To accomplish this, conferences have invested in upgrading their facilities, expanding their housing, hired year-round staff, and provided a variety of attractions...things that guests can participate in together throughout most of the year.

Many have found that camps are a great place for conventions, church and family retreats, weddings, Bible conferences, outdoor education experiences, Pathfinder Camporees, and more. Utilizing the natural surroundings to enhance a guest's experience, these destination sites provide facilities and amenities to accommodate both day and overnight events, meals, and recreational and outdoor activities to groups of various sizes. Here in the camp environment, there is time for reflection, recreation, rejuvenation, fellowship, training, encouragement, and personal growth.

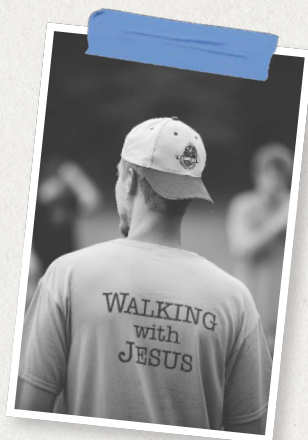


# Positions in Camp Ministry



## CAMP MINISTRY MODELS

One thing to remember is that every camp is different. Organization is different. Governance is different. And expectations can be different. But ministry goals are the same...those of making camp an effective ministry and evangelistic center. As such, each of the following areas are needed to achieve that purpose. While a few camps have only one or two staff filling these responsibilities, others have a dozen or more. Some conferences even share the burden by taking care of group bookings and finances at the conference office.



For example, there are conferences which have a youth director who oversees the camp's operation while others have on-site directors managing the day-to-day operation and are the link between the camp and the conference office. Larger camps provide this service at the camp itself finding it is more efficient to do so in their specific situation.

## JOB DESCRIPTIONS

On the next page is a list of general job titles and very brief overview of their potential job descriptions:



**Administration** (Titles can include Executive Director, Administrative Director, Camp Director, Summer Camp Director, Assistant Director, Camp Manager, Youth Director, Associate Youth Director)

1. Oversees the operation of the camp
2. Conducts regular staff meetings
3. Sits on the operating board
4. Conducts staff training
5. Recruits and hires staff
6. Promotes camp
7. Liaison to the conference leadership



**Office-Reservations-Secretarial** (Titles: Office Manager, Office Secretary, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Registrar, Guest Services Host, etc.)

1. Oversees the reservation process
2. Answers phones, emails, takes message, distributes mail, etc.
3. Checks in guest groups



**Business & Finances** (Titles: Business Manager, Cashier, HR Director, Treasurer, Finance Director, Accountant, etc.)

1. Maintains and reconciles petty cash
2. Pays invoices
3. Processes employee paperwork
4. Provides regular financial reports
5. Handles worker compensation





**Food Service** (Titles: Food Service Director, Assistant Food Service Director, Cook, Baker, Prep Line Staff, Food Service Helper, Food Service Worker, etc.)

1. Develops menus
  2. Orders food and supplies
  3. Prepares and serves food
  4. Keeps preparation and storage areas clean
- 



**Housekeeping** (Titles: Housekeeping Director, Housekeeper, Janitor, Janitorial Assistant, etc.)

1. Responsible for cleaning guest-used facilities including sleeping and meeting rooms
  2. Keeps general facilities clean
  3. Sets up and takes down meeting rooms
- 



**Maintenance** (Titles: Maintenance Director, Service Technician, Plumber, Electrician, Carpenter, General Maintenance Worker, etc.)

1. Responsible for the overall maintenance and repair of the camp facilities, grounds, trails, and roads
2. Repairs structural and mechanical damage and/or breakdowns
3. Keeps records of utility use as required by government authorities





**Mechanic** (Title: Mechanic, Welder, Auto Repair Worker, Heavy Equipment Operator, etc.)

1. Keeps camp vehicles in running condition
  2. Keeps heavy equipment functioning
  3. Records all servicing of vehicles and equipment
- 



**Attractions** (Title: Attractions Specialist, Attractions Staff, Camp Store Manager, Lifeguard, Challenge Course Facilitator, Archery Instructor, Go Cart operator, etc.)

1. Oversees, staffs, and operates the camp's attractions such as archery, go-carts, swimming pool, horse rides, challenge course elements, playgrounds, nature center, camp store, etc.
2. Keeps equipment in good repair
3. Takes a regular inventory
4. Trains staff as needed

## *A Lifetime of Service*

### WHERE YOU LIVE

Some camps require that you live on the camp's premises while others give you the option of purchasing or renting in a nearby town. There are advantages and disadvantages to each and should be carefully weighed.

### ADVANTAGES OF LIVING ON-SITE

1. Camp Security – You are aware of those coming and going. If there is an issue, you are right there to take care of it.



2. You can walk to work.
3. You can immediately respond to guest group needs.
4. You are away from “civilization,” so to speak...some literally, others less so.

## DISADVANTAGES TO LIVING ON-SITE

1. You could find yourself living in a “glass house” with minimal privacy.
2. You may not be able to invest in property, depending on the camp’s rental agreement policies.
3. You may be living further from town, meaning longer drives to get groceries and do shopping.

## COMPENSATION

The North American Division has a recommended pay scale for camp employees. However, each conference sets its own pay based on factors such as the cost of living, distance from “civilization,” and generally accepted wages for that area or region of the province or county. Compensation may also be in the form of reduced rent, free or minimal charges to eat in the camp’s cafeteria, and covering utilities (garbage, water, electricity, sewage, etc.).

## YOUR FAMILY

**Children & Education** – Families with children will want to check out the educational options for their children. Several camps are within reasonable driving distance of a local Adventist school while some families will choose home school as their option.

**Benefits for Children** – In some cases, social interaction may be limited during the week, but on weekends, guest groups can provide some friendship opportunities. Living in an outdoor setting can stimulate learning about the flora, fauna, geology, and more. For older children, opportunities for work in the kitchen, housekeeping, or helping with some of the camp activities can be a good introduction to a potential lifework.



## YOUR COWORKERS

When you join a camp with other staff families, take time to become acquainted with them. Of course, you are not expected to spend morning, noon, and night in their company, but be sure to avoid isolating yourself from them. Families that live in the same “glass house” will find occasion to disagree but must reconcile immediately if those disagreements are creating a wedge between them. Staff must practice forgiveness (just as we have been forgiven).

## FULL-TIME CAREER OR TEMPORARY

The Lord will call some into full-time camp ministry. How long one remains in camp ministry is of the Lord’s choosing. Remember, each experience can help in personal growth and ministry. We know that the adversary will do all he can to disrupt, dismantle, and diminish the effectiveness of the camp’s ministry to people. Pray for one another, especially those in leadership, as well as those with whom you work.

## PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

Most who retire from camp ministry will have at least two sources of income: Social Security and their Adventist

Retirement Account. The latter account takes a given percentage of each paycheck and adds half again as much to your retirement fund. These funds are invested for you, but you can also manage the account. Experts say that you need to put away about 15% of your paycheck from the start of your adult life to be able to retire with sufficient funds to continue your current lifestyle. For more information, check with your Adventist Retirement associates in the North American Division.

While those funds are useful, you may also want to consider investing in property or a house if you live on the camp's premises. Some will purchase a house and then rent it out at a rate to cover most of the expenses. Then there is a place in which to move upon retirement.

# The Call to Camp Ministry



## THE "TAP ON THE SHOULDER"

Calls from the Lord can come in a variety of ways... perhaps by an audible voice or during a quiet, contemplative moment. Or maybe it was a memory of your commitment to Jesus at summer camp that came to your mind, and you have felt compelled to give others the same chance to answer that call, too.

## QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

First, you must be a disciple of Jesus. Previous experience in some jobs is essential (like being a mechanic or maintenance worker). Other jobs can be learned. Regardless, having a clear understanding of purpose of camp ministry is essential...and that is advancing the Kingdom of God.



## YOUR NAME IN THE HAT

Someone once said that “it’s who you know” that can get your name in the hat. Certainly, the Lord can arrange circumstances and/or acquaintances to achieve His will in calling someone into camp ministry. If you sense such a calling, submit your name as a possible candidate for consideration.

# The Hiring Process

## METHODS OF HIRING

Depending on the conference and the position being filled, any number of hiring methods might be used. Camp administrators are hired by the conference administration, sometimes via the conference executive committee, while in other scenarios, the camp board is charged with that responsibility. For non-administrative positions, the camp director may do the hiring in counsel with the conference administration and/or executive committee.

## INTERVIEWS

Most positions will require an interview and background check. This gives potential employers a chance to determine if a candidate is the right fit for the position. Most often they take place in person, but depending on circumstances, they may be on Zoom or a similar format. Remember, it is their chance to get to know you, but also your chance to get to know them.

This is also the time to find out in more detail the job expectations, living situation, compensation, etc. You will also want to determine the level of responsibility and autonomy you will have...will you be micromanaged or given the freedom to do what you know needs to be done with appropriate counsel as needed.

## THE INVITATION

Once a consensus or vote is taken, a call will be extended to you.



# Mentoring and Continuing Education

## ASSOCIATION OF ADVENTIST CAMP PROFESSIONALS (AACP)

This association was formed in 1995 with the mission to “equip and support camp ministry professionals as they advance the Kingdom of God.” A board of elected officers and union representatives meet regularly throughout the year to review its support of the membership. The highlight of AACP is the yearly convention where all Adventist camp professionals are invited to attend the three-to-four-day event in the fall...and families are welcome to attend as well. A monthly e-newsletter keeps the members connected throughout the rest of the year with programming ideas, camp news, and more.



## MENTORING

While many who apply to work at camp may have been summer camp staff, the year-round operation is more complicated and can become overwhelming at times. Being a summer camp counselor is far different than being a summer camp director.

The Association of Adventist Camp Professionals offers a mentoring program for some positions. It involves an on-site visit by the mentor, a review of the job description, and

practical advice to help you get your feet on the ground right at the beginning of your ministry.

The mentor will be someone who has been approved by the AACP board and is proficient in and familiar with your job's responsibilities. Your mentor will be only a phone call away and is there to help you get off on the right foot.



## PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

In the United States, camps are encouraged to be members of the American Camp Association. While they hold an annual ACA conference, a major benefit is the camp accreditation program that the association offers. It is the national standard of the professional camping industry in the United States while each province in Canada has its own association with similar standards and meetings. These standards are the accepted level of professional practices that are expected of every camp. Any camp that goes to court will want to be accredited as court judgements most often refer to these standards.

Another support group is the Christian Camp and Conference Association, also known as 3CA (CCI in Canada). They offer a national conference gathering each year where several hundred camp leaders from a variety of Christian denominations fellowship and share ideas focused on camp ministry.



# Getting Acquainted with Your...

## CO-WORKERS AT CAMP

If you have the privilege of having other employees at the camp, get to know them as part of the camp family. You are a team that works together, supports each other, and are focused on the same ministry to each one of your guests. An occasional staff event outside of the camp is both healthy and essential for staff bonding, friendship, and support. It may be a meal at a restaurant, a game night or picnic, an afternoon of miniature golfing, a birthday celebration, or a visit to a waterpark.



## FELLOW CONFERENCE OFFICE WORKERS

Most camps are located a fair distance from the conference office. However, you will want to take time to get to

know them, too. It is quite common for departmental staff to hold events at the camp. Work with them to make their stay an exceptional experience. It will build good-will and comradery between the camp and the conference office staff.



## COMMUNITY & NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS

No matter where the camp is located, you will have neighbors. To be a good witness, you must be a good

neighbor. Become involved, if possible, in community events...after all, camp is a part of the community. Maybe have a community day at the camp, inviting them for a day of camp-sponsored activities, apple fritters, or apple cider. Share their community concerns and do what you can do to further the common goals. Build positive relationships by being a real Christian in every sense of the word.

## GUEST GROUPS

While guest groups, both Adventist and non-Adventist, may only visit the camp once a year, take time to get acquainted with them. Make sure you have several of their favorite camp foods on the menu. There are others who enjoy having one or more of the camp staff have a sermon or evening talk...make that happen.

Groups find camp a wonderful place for fellowship. Be sure to include them in your friendship circle.

## SUMMER CAMP STAFF

While some camps have twenty or so summer camp staff, others may have more than a hundred. Year-round staff should take the time to get acquainted with as many as possible.

Your adult experiences and lessons learned in high school/academy and college could provide much-needed counsel to those staff members. Pray for them as they minister to the young people who come into their care.



## CONFERENCE CONSTITUENCY

Remember, the camp does not belong to you. It belongs to the conference's constituents. When they come to camp, they are not invading your private territory. You are a steward of all that the Lord has placed in your trust and care for the benefit of your constituents and guests. They want to know how their camp is doing and that the Kingdom of God is advancing because of the ministry occurring at camp.



## YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

While you may not be able to attend church every week, do all you can to be a part of your local church family. Take on a share of responsibility as you are able. Attend their social gatherings as much as possible, even inviting them to camp for a Sabbath afternoon hike.

# *Keeping the Faith*



Though we do not usually think of it that way, life is a battlefield. And the battles are most intense where Jesus is being uplifted and ministry is taken seriously. Here are areas to keep your faith strong and your armor on:

## PERSONAL

Regardless of what others do or do not do, keep your personal devotional and prayer life active. Because of the nature of camp, you may want to keep a prayer journal listing praises, prayers, and answered prayers. It is a good thing to have on hand when we are tempted to become discouraged. Remembering answered prayers then becomes a source of joy and courage.

## FAMILY LIFE

Though it is ever so tempting, do not let camp be your all-in-all – especially those who tend to be workaholics. The family should never be ignored. Take your vacations. Use your holidays. Enjoy family time. Explore the camp together. Work together. Visit local attractions together. Doing things together will strengthen your family bonds and thus become a blessing to the camp.

## FACING THE CHALLENGES

In any ministry you will find challenging times. Issues will unexpectedly arise that will catch you off guard. In every difficulty, we are to see a call for prayer. Commit the camp to Jesus' care knowing that whatever comes along, He will walk through the storm with you. As someone once said, "Stay focused...and ask yourself, what would Jesus do?"

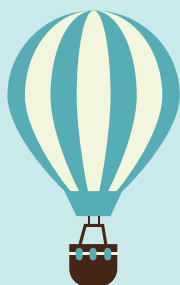


*Still thinking about  
full-time camp ministry?*

If so, go to [AdventistCamps.org/year-round-applicant](https://AdventistCamps.org/year-round-applicant)  
and complete the information page.



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Adventist Church

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