



FINDING DIRECTION

**A CAMPER FAMILY SURVEY TO GUIDE CHRISTIAN CAMPS
IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19**

**Participants: Camper families
from 15 camping organizations
representing 26 camps,
located in 16 states**

**Surveys completed:
2535 from 42 states
(23% response rate)
April 8-12, 2020**

**Report presented:
by Jake Sorenson
& Casey Fuerst
April 13, 2020**

A joint project of

SACRED  **PLAYGROUNDS**


tic tac toe
MARKETING



FINDING DIRECTION REPORT

As a leader of a Christian Camp, you are navigating uncharted waters. You are making decisions daily that have enormous impact on your organization and the people you employ and serve. It's a mind-boggling task that you never imagined you'd be called to in this environment.

We want to help. Sacred Playgrounds and Tic Tac Toe Marketing have joined together to collect data from camper families from Christian camps across the nation. Our hope is that this information will help to inform the decisions you make. Armed with actual information, you will be able to lead better now and cast a vision for the future in stronger ways.

This report was compiled from 2535 surveys (23% response rate) submitted by families from 26 Christian camps across the nation. The camps represented are Lutheran, United Methodist, Episcopalian and non-denominational. It's important to note that the majority of these responses came from campers who are already registered for camp in 2020, That means they are the most committed of your camper base.

We wish we could capture all of the love for camp that was shared in these surveys. It is inspiring to hear the ways that Christian camping is impacting families across this country. You are a critical part of the faith-lives of so many!

We encourage you to use this report in three ways:

1. Educate yourself and your board on the way camper families are feeling about camp in the midst of this global pandemic.
2. Knowing what families want and need is an enormous asset. Use this information to make important decisions and get creative about how you can continue to be a valued resource.
3. Start planning now for when you can reopen. You have people in your midst who are counting on you. They need you to be there when the world opens back up!

There is so much at stake. Once again, the responses to this survey remind us of the impact that camps have on the lives of campers and their families. As you continue this important work, know that we are praying for you, cheering our loudest, and supporting you in any way we can!

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SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The following information tells you about the people who filled out the survey.

STATES REPRESENTED

42 total states are represented.

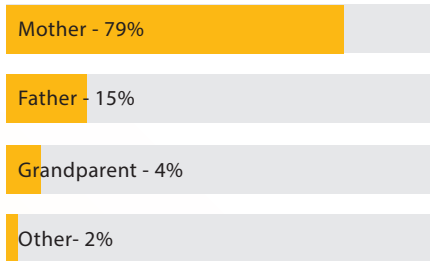
The West responses come almost exclusively from the Mountain West region. The Pacific West is underrepresented (CA, OR, WA, AK, and HI).

CAMPS REPRESENTED

15 Camping Organizations representing 26 camp sites in 16 states.

Camps are a diverse mix of Lutheran, United Methodist, Episcopalian, and non-denominational.

RELATIONSHIP TO CAMPER

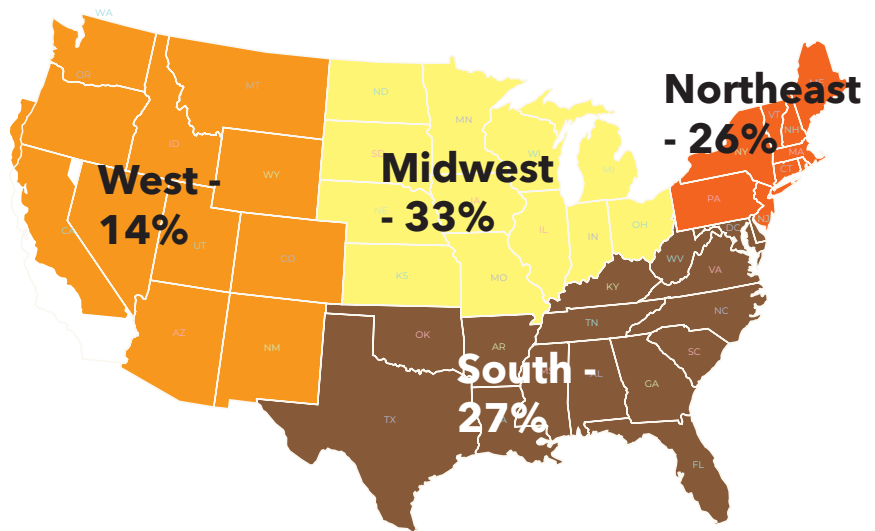


CAMPERS IN HOUSEHOLDS:

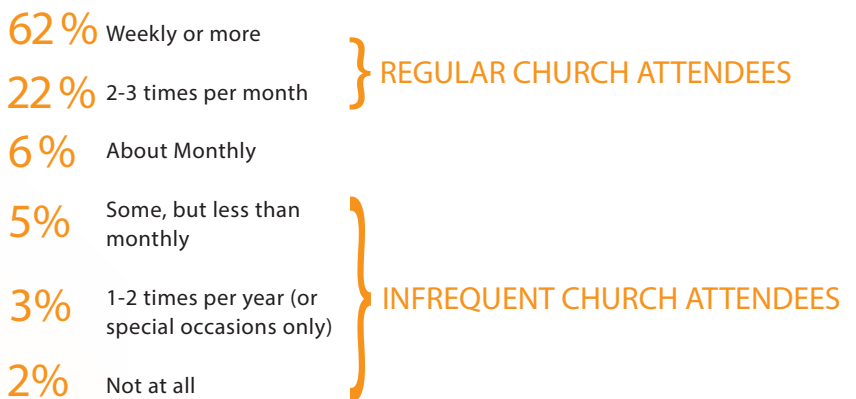
- 26% Elementary age only
- 26% Middle school age only
- 20% High school age only
- 11% Elementary and middle school age (no high school)
- 10% Middle and high school age (no elementary school)
- 4% Mixed ages from elementary to high school
- 3% Adult campers

Surveys completed: 2535

LOCATION



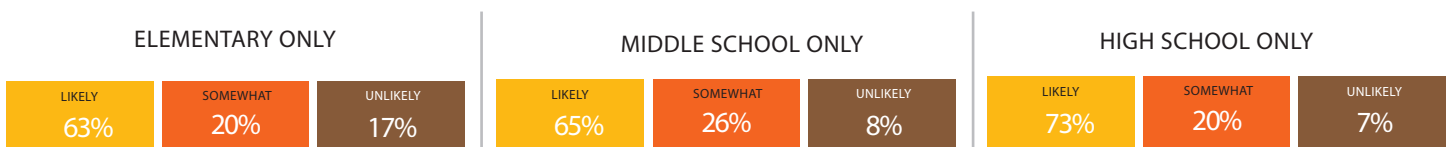
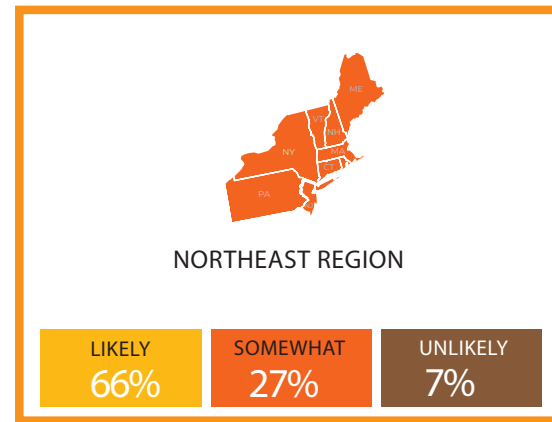
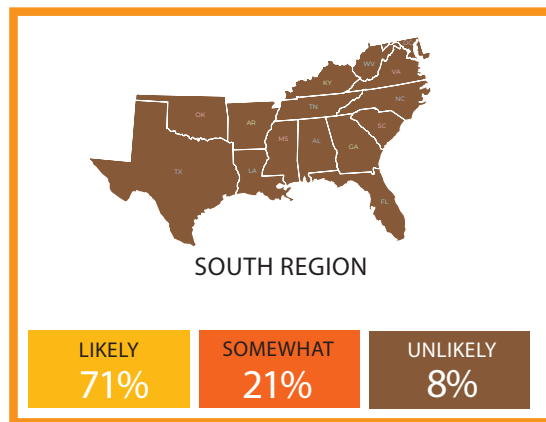
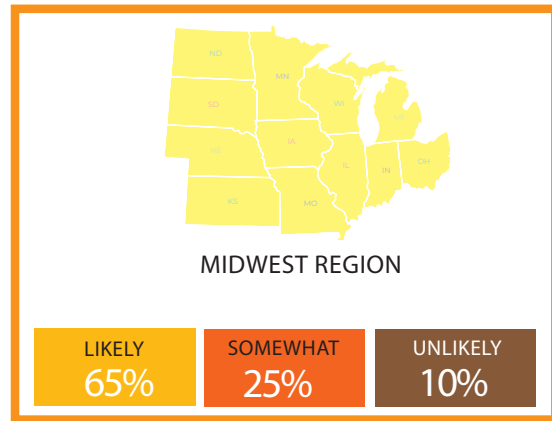
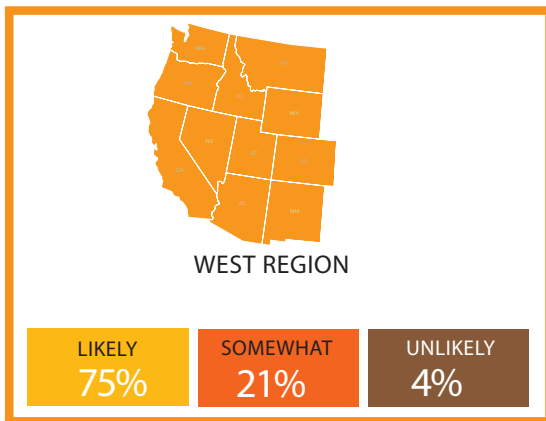
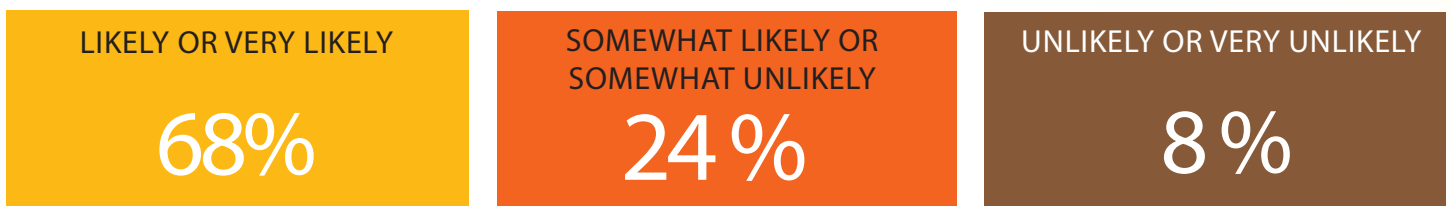
BEFORE COVID-19, CHURCH ATTENDANCE



SUMMER CAMP 2020 ATTENDANCE

The following information indicates the likelihood of summer camp attendance and what would need to happen for them to feel comfortable attending.

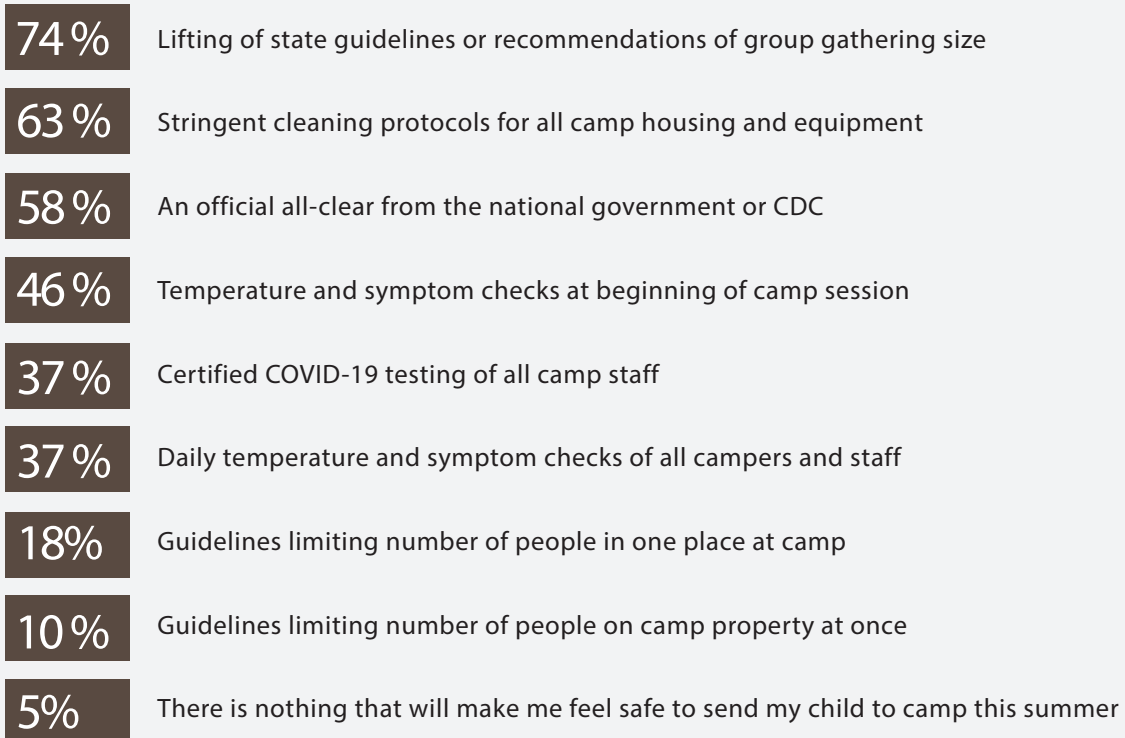
If official restrictions on gatherings were lifted and summer camp was allowed to be held as normal this summer, how likely would you be to send your child(ren) to overnight summer camp?



SUMMER CAMP 2020 ATTENDANCE

The following information indicates the likelihood of summer camp attendance and what would need to happen for them to feel comfortable attending.

Which of the following would you deem necessary before you considered sending your child to camp this summer?



- 2% of respondents did not specify any stipulations, and some commented that they were not worried at all about COVID-19.
- 65% of respondents identified three or more of the listed stipulations.
- 1% of respondents made open-ended comments that they would not feel comfortable sending their children without a major breakthrough: a vaccine, a cure, or rapid testing for all participants to ensure no one attending had the virus.

QUOTES FROM PARENTS

I would not send my children to camp if they would be subjected to testing while there.

Keeping a close watch out for any camper or staff who develops a fever or exhibits other symptoms; and having a plan in place to allow anyone developing symptoms to be isolated, and, if necessary, evacuated for medical help.

We would need to be financially able to afford to go.

QUOTES FROM PARENTS

THIS IS A SMALL SAMPLE OF THE QUOTES SUBMITTED. WE'VE TRIED TO CHOOSE QUOTES THAT REPRESENT THE WHOLE.

Stay healthy so when we do return to normal, camp is there for our use. Thank you for reaching out. If camp is cancelled there will be a broken heart, but she will mend and we will try again next summer.

Stay healthy, stay safe. We know this is temporary so if my children need to miss a summer of camp they can go in 2021.

We are praying for wisdom and health so this summer can go off without a hitch.



If you can't (or won't) have people on site, conserve resources for future years - please don't waste time/energy/money with online program that is antithesis to the whole point of camp and would just be lost in the noise of what everyone else is doing.

Preserve your capital so that when this is under better control the camps still exist!

Camp is important and the kids will want to get outside after this stay at home order is lifted. Please keep summer camp on if possible.

I'm praying my camper can attend this summer. He absolutely loved it last year and grew so much. I would hate to see camp cancelled but I also completely understand if it has to be.

Honestly I want to send my kids this year, but I don't know if we can afford it since employment is still questionable. I am concerned about the spread of disease but am trusting God during this time and am anxious to get back to normal. If camp is going to still be available I will pay as much as I can in order for my girls to have this experience.

Cost would be a big issue for our family this year.

QUOTES FROM PARENTS

THIS IS A SMALL SAMPLE OF THE QUOTES SUBMITTED. WE'VE TRIED TO CHOOSE QUOTES THAT REPRESENT THE WHOLE.

I feel terrible about being so frightened about sending them, even if things get better. But, my one son has an underlying health condition and I'm just so scared. I feel badly for your business and all of the economy right now. I wish you a lot of health and prosperity and can assure you my children will return eventually.

I'm really hoping restrictions will be lifted and we can send our camper to camp for the first time, she is excited and I think it could be a great experience for her in many ways. I appreciate you trying to think of other ways like online stuff or a family getaway, but that isn't what we are looking for; with no history at the camp I don't think online will have much impact and since both parents work full time we don't have a vacation week to use to go to camp.

As our kids have been out of normal school routine, if the regulations are relaxed by summer I would hope & trust that camp could go ahead. The mental health issues that are arising in these uncertain times are paramount and sending kids off to camp would be the best thing for them spiritually and mentally.

We continue to pray for you.

Hope that we can get past this and you can have camp, we believe it is very important in our children's faith journey. Much love to all of you and the wonderful staff! We are pray-ing!

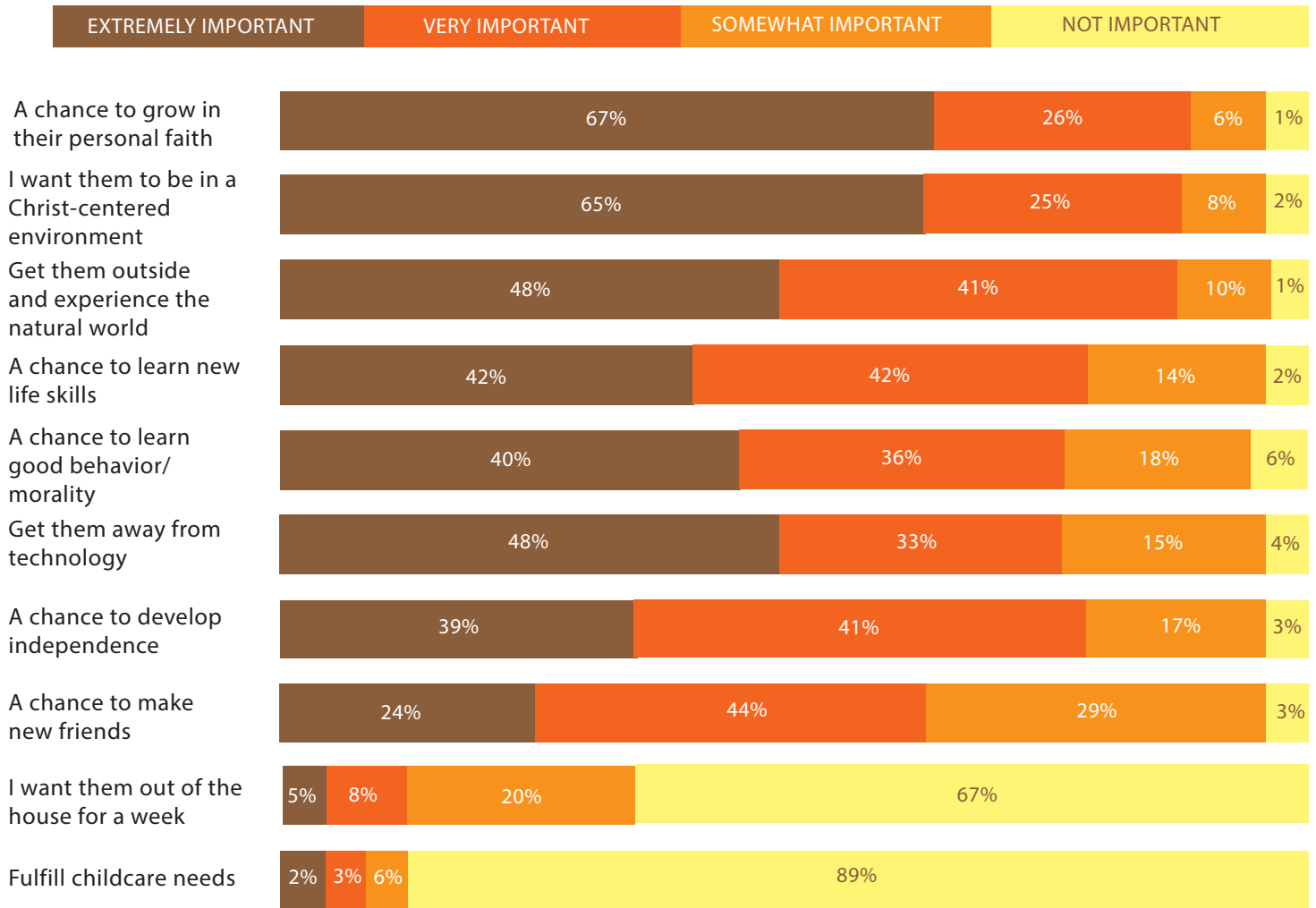
Just preserve the facility so that it can be there for whenever this craziness is over. It's truly God's country and we love it there.

I hope you can delay a decision about cancelling summer camp as long as possible, although I understand the need to prepare and plan and you may have to make some difficult decisions.

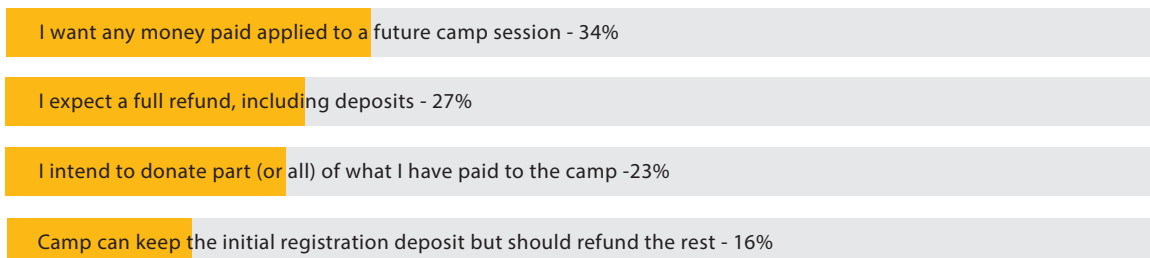


THE VALUE OF SUMMER CAMP

What do you value most about what summer camp can offer your children?

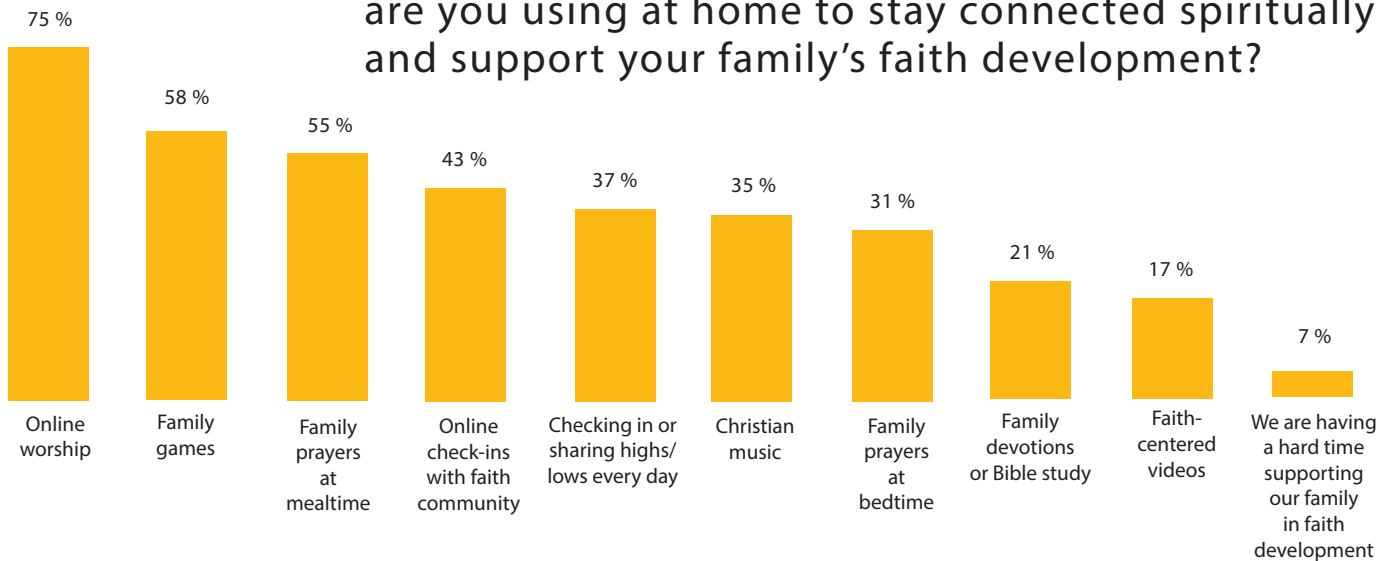


If camp had to close this summer, what is your desire/intention for any money you have already paid?



FAITH DEVELOPMENT AT HOME

During this time of national crisis, what resources are you using at home to stay connected spiritually and support your family's faith development?



How else can camp serve you and your family?

We received 355 open-ended responses. The following themes were pulled from those responses.

Theme 1: We love camp!

This theme was understood, loud and clear. Respondents LOVE CAMP. Many hope for camp to happen this summer for their children, but they also want to make sure that camp takes care of itself so that it is there in the future, when the crisis passes. Scores of respondents wanted to express that camp is in their prayers. They also expressed appreciation for the chance to respond to the survey.

Theme 2: We want to send our kids to camp!

A third of respondents expressed that they were still hoping to have camp this summer. These respondents showed a great deal of trust in camp staff to make a good decision. They also expressed their love and deep desire to have camp. Most understood that camp would be different or even delayed, but many requested postponement of sessions to later in the summer rather than cancellation.

Theme 3: Keep camp alive!

There was a strong sentiment among respondents that camp was important and that they wanted camp to survive. Some were afraid that the consequences of the pandemic would hurt the camp or force it to close down. Some respondents expressed a desire to help, either saying that they would donate their registration fee or wanting to give in some other way.

Theme 4: Alternative Resources: If camp cannot happen this summer, there were mixed reviews on potential alternatives.

About 10% of respondents thought that online Bible study or other programming would be valuable. Another 5% said that online programming would not be used or would even be the antithesis of camp. A small number suggested alternative onsite programs that might run in an abnormal summer.

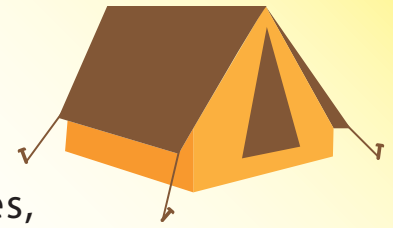
Theme 5: There were mixed responses as to why the camp might be forced to close.

Some directly addressed the problem of COVID-19, but more common were references to government regulations that might close the camp. Those who were hoping to have camp this summer conceded that it might not be possible because of government regulations. It is notable that some constituents will question the need to close camp if the state government does not officially force them to do so.

Theme 6: Financial Hardship:

Some respondents noted that they are experiencing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. Some said they might not be able to attend camp, even if it were open, because of financial struggles. Others said they would need a refund because of financial hardship.

CAMP RESOURCES YOU MIGHT USE?



If your camp was able to provide the following resources, would you use them?

	No, would not use	Maybe	Yes, would use if FREE	Yes, would PAY to use
ON-SITE getaway/retreat for your family, with limited or no contact with others	37 %	42 %	7 %	14 %
ON-SITE gathering with other families, using recommended safety precautions	42 %	39 %	6 %	13 %
ON-SITE hike, explore, and just get outside	25 %	42 %	19 %	14 %
ON-SITE day only programs designed for families (e.g. geocaching, nature study, etc.)	43 %	36 %	9 %	12 %

- People who attend church regularly are more likely to attend, participate and pay for camp offerings.
- Those in elementary are less likely to participate online, and are more willing to pay for onsite activities.
- Those in high school show higher likelihood of participating in online activities.

We chose 'maybe' for most of the online/virtual camp experiences because if we can't get back to camp physically, we'd be open to this option if we were able to navigate having our daughter be on the computer vs. our working responsibilities. If too complicated, we'd prefer to postpone her experience (it would be the first) to later in the summer or just wait until next year.

Like the idea of family camp weekend getaway with smaller numbers and activities. if you cant have big numbers, then that would be a good compromise.

Online summer camp defeats the purpose of being outside. If it was the only option, my kids might still want to try it because they love camp that much.

I asked my kids about the options listed above to see what they thought. At this point in time, they are not excited about the idea of online virtual camp. To them, the point of camp is to be AT camp WITH new and old friends and doing fun activities together. Maybe after many more weeks at home they would be more willing to do an online version of camp...

CAMP RESOURCES YOU MIGHT USE?



If your camp was able to provide the following resources, would you use them?

	No, would not use	Maybe	Yes, would use if FREE	Yes, would PAY to use
ONLINE virtual camp worship or campfire	38%	39%	19%	4%
ONLINE resources for camp games/activities to do at home	33%	42%	22%	3%
ONLINE or MAILED camp Bible study resources to use at home	30%	42%	22%	6%
ONLINE entertainment featuring camp personalities	35%	44%	17%	4%
ONLINE virtual camp devotions and check-ins, live with campers and staff	33%	44%	16%	7%
ONLINE virtual camp programs, complete with cabin groups, daily meetings and interactions	40%	41%	10%	9%



I don't see my child doing any unless it was the whole church youth group activity.

We are getting so many resources from school and church right now that we can not handle anymore items.

I appreciate the thoughts but camp just isn't camp if it is virtual. We can't add another virtual thing to our lives now. My hope is that camp will happen and my child can be disconnected from all things virtual!!!

KEY REPORT TAKE-AWAYS

CAMPS ARE
LOVED
BY PARENTS!

PARENTS WANT
CAMP TO HAPPEN,
IF AT ALL
POSSIBLE.

MORE THAN
ANYTHING,
PARENTS WANT
CAMPS TO
SURVIVE.

THE IDEA
OF VIRTUAL
CAMP IS NOT VERY
POPULAR.

CALCULATING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Use the following calculator to determine what this means for your summer camp attendance.

IF THE DATA HOLDS TRUE FOR YOUR CAMP:

- IF 68% of campers that are currently registered attend
- IF 1/2 of those that indicate they are somewhat likely or unlikely to attend (24%) come.
- IF the other 8% that indicate they are unlikely to attend, do NOT come;
- THEN this means that you can count on only 80% of your currently registered campers to attend camp.
- We assume that the interim time between now and May 1 is lost for camper registration and you will not make up this deficit.
- IF you are able to announce 'camp will be open' on May 1, we will assume that you get the same number of camper registrations from May 1 to the beginning of summer as you did in 2019. While some will stay away because of the virus outbreak, there are also some families who were delaying registration until the picture was clearer.

CURRENT NUMBER
OF CAMPER
REGISTRATIONS

x .80 =

+

NUMBER OF CAMPERS
REGISTRATIONS YOU
RECEIVED AFTER
MAY 1, 2019

=

ESTIMATE
ATTENDANCE
FOR SUUMMER
CAMP 2020

With this information, you can more easily calculate financial impact for both scenerios - holding camp or cancelling camp.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We would like to make the following recommendations for follow-up work for individual camps and camping organizations.

1. Send this report to your staff and board. Review it together and talk about implications for your organization.
2. Consider doing a survey of your camper base so that you know exactly what your camper families are thinking about for summer and needing for resources to support their faith development.
3. Your camper families love you and have a deep emotional connection to your site, people and programs. Now is the time to invest in those relationships so that when camp opens, you are ready to serve them and they are ready to come back.
4. Plan. In addition to financial and program planning, create communications and fundraising plans for each scenerio. When you open camp back up, make a HUGE deal out of it and celebrate often. Invite donors to be a part of this celebration with their gifts and attendance.

WE WOULD LOVE TO HELP.
HEAD TO EITHER WEBSITE TO SIGN UP
FOR A FREE CONSULTATION!

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