

Theological Perspectives on the Temporary Community/Camping and the Church

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Purpose of this Paper

In 2002, CCI/USA, now CCCA, defined Christian camping as: "An experience within a temporary community using the outdoor setting and trained leaders to meet spiritual objectives." This definition includes a temporary community, the outdoor setting, trained leaders, and purpose, "to meet spiritual objectives." Perhaps this definition is symbolic of the connection between Christian camping and the church in that it does not explicitly relate the purpose of Christian camping to the church. Is Christian camping to serve the church? Does the church need Christian camping? Perhaps Christian camping need serve only the universal church. Does Christian camping have any responsibility for the local church? Should the local church take any responsibility for Christian camping? Do these questions need answering? Christian camping seems to have done well over its history running on parallel tracks with the church. Little has been done to address these questions. What does the Bible say about the church and the relationship between organizations doing ministry outside of the local church? The purpose of this paper is to better understand if, why, and how Christian camping and the church should be related. Since the church was instituted by Christ who is the cornerstone (Matt. 21:42, 1 Peter 2:4-6) and consists of all who have placed their faith in Christ and are joined together in this spiritual household, it is important that we look at the nature of the church first before we look at the relationship between the camp/temporary community and the church.

The Church and its Function

The church is a holy body -- a group of people responding to God's call to be a distinct people in intimate relationship with Him. The church universal is the body of faith throughout the world including those who have gone before into eternal rest. The universal images of the church are portrayed as the loved bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25, 32, Rev. 19:7) and the body with the head being Christ (1 Cor. 1:27; Eph. 1:22, 23; 5: 23-24; Col. 1:18, 24). The church is the temple of God where His Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:22). Those who are committed followers and have received His grace through Christ bearing our sins through His death on the cross are his physical temple where His Spirit dwells and therefore the church. The church is His household (Eph. 2:19), his family. It receives God's protection and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18) and anyone who attempts to destroy the church will be destroyed (1 Cor. 3:17). It is through the church that the "manifold wisdom of God" is made known throughout the heavenly realms (Eph. 3:10). God is glorified in the church as He is in Christ (Eph. 3:21). Christ loves the church for we as redeemed people are members of His body (Eph. 5:25, 30). As one body, we also belong to one another (Ro. 12:5) and each has special gifts to contribute to the benefit of the body and in building the body (Ro. 12:6). The church is partner with Christ in building the church and bringing each member to full maturity in the faith (Eph. 4:12, 13) so that the church can be presented to Christ "as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:27).

The church is central to the kingdom of God. Jesus stated that the kingdom of God exists within those doing His will (Luke 17:21). Paul wrote: "for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men" (Ro. 14:17, 18). Those in the church doing God's will show forth His kingdom to the world. They are acting in concert with Christ who is reconciling the world to Himself and establishing His kingdom on earth (2 Cor. 5:19). The church has the privilege of being ministers of reconciliation in this process (1 Cor. 5:18) and in building the body of Christ toward maturity. It is God's instrument in His kingdom and is sustained by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

The word "church" is also used in reference to the local church meeting in houses (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2), in communities (Rom. 16:1, Eph. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:2, I Thes. 1:1, Rev. 2:11), in regions (Acts 15:23, Rom. 16:16, I Cor. 16:19, Gal. 1:2), and in differing political or ethnic areas (Rom. 16:3). The universal church is always present where believers live. The local group of believers worshiping and meeting together is an expression of the universal church. The existence of the universal church in no way invalidates the necessity and place of the local body of believers in achieving the purposes of the kingdom of God in that part of God's kingdom. Just as Christ is God incarnate in the flesh who dwelt among us (John 1:14), so is the church the body of believers incarnate in a distinct locale. No matter where the church exists, it is called to be a holy body meeting together and distinct from other communities of peoples who live without a relationship with Christ (Hebrews 10:22-25). The purpose of the local body is to glorify God in all aspects of life and community (Eph. 3:21) and to bear witness of the hope within them to the communities in which they are apart (I Peter 2: 11-12). The body is responsible for proclaiming the gospel (good news) of Christ, His nature, His life, His death and resurrection, and His ability to forgive and give eternal life (Eph. 3:10). Each member of the local church is called to be an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) through whom God is making His appeal to their local community and to be both "salt" and "light" (Matt. 5:13-14). The church is to reflect a new order in community living, political life, use of resources, and concern for the poor, widowed, weak, and disenfranchised. It is to clearly show forth the kingdom of God that has been announced by Christ (Matt. 12: 28) and already come in part but yet will come in its fullness when Christ returns (Eph. 1: 9-10).

The church as a local body of believers is called to come apart to assemble together on a regular basis to worship, instruct, encourage, and strengthen one other in the faith (Acts 9:31, 11:22, 26, I Cor. 14:26, 31) so that there "will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Eph. 4:14, NIV).

Scripture teaches that the local church also has special functions. It is to provide discipline to its members (Matt. 18:15-17, I Cor. 5:1-5, 12). The church is to rebuke those who sin publicly so that others may be warned (I Tim. 5:20). The church is to function impartially without favoritism (1 Tim. 5:21). It is the first group to which Christians must turn in order to resolve a dispute (1 Cor. 6:1-6). The church is to provide for those who are needy in the church (Acts 4:35, 1 Tim. 5:3). The church is to be inclusive of all believers no matter their ethnic, socio-economic, or racial background (Acts 11:18-21). The church's role is to commission missionaries and ministers of the gospel (Acts 13:2, 3) and appoint workers to administer to the physical needs of those in the church (Acts 6:3, 4, 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Each local church is to appoint godly elders and deacons (I Tim. 3:1-10) to oversee the ministry of the church as "shepherds of the church of God" (Acts 20:28, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4) and to care for physical needs of the congregation (Acts 6:1-6). The church must take care of its elders and provide for their needs as they serve the church (1 Tim. 5:17-18). The elders of the church are to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil when requested (James 5:14, 15). The church is responsible for guarding the purity of the faith while affirming the immutables and carefully considering how non-essentials should be treated (Acts 15:6-19). The church has been given special gifts that are to be used to edify the believers when they meet together (1 Cor. 12:27-31, 14:12, 26). The church should seek peace as members of one body. It should encourage an attitude of thankfulness, teach God's Word, and admonish its members to follow these teachings. It should incorporate singing of psalms, hymns, and songs with gratitude into its times of meeting (Col. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 2:42) "for the strengthening of the church" (I Cor. 14:26, NIV). It should celebrate the Lord's Supper when they meet (I Cor. 11:17-34.) It should remember those who are suffering for the sake of the gospel (Col. 4:18). Each church is encouraged to help other churches with their needs (Acts 11:27-30, 2 Cor. 8:19, 9:5).

In conclusion, the church and, in particular, the local church, is the primary institution where the benefits of Christ are mediated to the body of Christ and where the message of salvation, the Gospel, is primarily proclaimed. Christians are exhorted in Hebrews to "not give up meeting together" (Heb. 10:25, NIV) which often leads to back-sliding and to do so "all the more as you see the day approaching". Even Jesus "went to the synagogue, as was his custom" (Luke 4:16, NIV) on the Sabbath day. The church then is God's primary means of grace to the believer.

From this brief overview of the definition and purpose of the church, it is essential to see that the church, and, in particular, the local church, is central to the proclamation of the Word and in bringing believers toward full maturity in the faith and in building itself, the church, the temple, and bride of Christ.

Biblical and Ecclesiastical Roots of Camping/Temporary Communities

The camp/temporary community throughout the history of man has been a symbol of movement away from the harsh realities and problems of life and toward a new promised land. Camping, literally defined as staying in temporary shelters, began shortly after creation when the sin of Adam and Eve separated them from God, each other, and existing in harmony with creation. Expelled from the Garden of Eden, they became a people without roots traveling as nomads and living in temporary shelters until communities were formed in environments with adequate resources employing collaborative efforts to become self-sustaining. Droughts, fire, extreme weather, pestilence, disease, war, dwindling resources, and even wild animals all threatened these primitive communities causing them to again move on in search for a better land. That better land has never fully been found as the sin of man has traveled into those new communities with wars, dislocation of people from their homelands, and destruction of resources. Even the earth under the curse and controlled by forces of evil continues to turn on man. All of this has prevented the realization of shalom and perfect existence.

Temporary community roots extend back to early biblical history to Abraham and Sarah and their willingness to be obedient to God to leave their permanent home, Haran, and travel to an unknown land of Canaan that he would show them. God promised that by following Him in faith they would become a great nation through which “all peoples on earth would be blessed” (Gen. 12:3, NIV). He wanted them to separate from their family of origin and pagan social/religious roots and become a part of His family. Their journey to and settling into their new land was not without testing. They faced famine, perceived threat to Abram’s life because of his wife’s beauty, quarreling between herdsmen of Abraham and nephew Lot, capture and deportation of Lot and his family, and God’s cleansing the land of unrepentant people (Sodom and Gomorrah) which threatened Lot and his family. Even God’s promise of making a great nation out of Abraham and Sarah seemed doomed to failure when Sarah was well beyond child-bearing age and unable to conceive. Being faithful to God’s promise, they journeyed as a temporary community that was far from perfect but reflected the blessing of God. They looked forward to the perfect permanent community, “the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10). Their journey of faith was the beginning of a God-centered, monotheistic nation. Even today their travels and establishment of that covenant community of faith remains a focal point for both the Jewish people and Christianity.

Because of famine and God sending Joseph ahead of his brothers to Egypt, the children of Israel (Jacob) lived in Egypt away from their promised land for 400 years. The Israelites lived under cruel and oppressive slavery of the Egyptians and cried out to God for deliverance. God heard the cry of His people and called Moses to lead them out of Egypt to again establish them as a community of purity and faith in their promised land. Moses was called by God to lead this camping journey that was initially intended to be a short temporary camping/temporary community experience. However, because of their stubbornness it lasted the longest of any in recorded history. They were kept wandering for forty years in the wilderness until they were ready to be reestablished in their promised land as a God-centered, obedient community. Through Moses, God instructed them in appropriate worship practices, provided them with righteous norms for community life, laws for governance and justice, guidelines for teaching and reminding each generation of God’s commandments and provision, and cultural customs and holidays that celebrated God’s goodness. It was their time apart from pagan cultural influences that allowed them to be free to establish a God-centered culture. As a perpetual reminder of their years of wandering and camping and as a time for celebrative recommitment, each year the Children of Israel were to camp out for seven days in tents in a holiday called the “feast of the tabernacles.”

Jesus used the temporary community experience for his ministry. His three-year ministry was primarily that of traveling with his disciples throughout the area of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee rather than remaining in Nazareth, his hometown. Most likely there were several reasons for his traveling with his disciples. It provided Jesus with a greater audience for his ministry, it allowed him

some distance from the growing resistance from the Jewish religious leaders, and it permitted his disciples to be free from the conforming pressures of their permanent communities as they physically left their past to follow him.

Jesus himself had difficulty ministering in his home/permanent community. Even though the people of Nazareth were amazed at his teaching they still considered him as merely the carpenter's son whose mother was Mary. Their lack of respect and faith kept Jesus from performing but few miracles. They were not willing to admit that he was not just a carpenter but the Son of God (Matt. 13:54-58).

The camping/temporary community has continued to be used in ministry by Christians over the centuries from spiritual retreats to gatherings in out-the-way places to teach and worship sometimes to be out of sight of persecuting authorities (Mattson, 1998). One of the more significant forms of the temporary community in church history was the monastic movement.

The monastic movement, beginning in the fourth century, had its roots during the gradual decay of the Roman Empire and the church. Puritanical laymen who were frustrated with the increased moral decadence of the upper classes of the Roman society and the growing pagan practices within the church withdrew from society. Fueled also by Gnostic and Neoplatonic movements that considered the spirit good and flesh evil, the early forms of monasticism were characterized by individuals seeking an ascetic hermit type of existence. By the early part of the fourth century a communal form of monasticism began in Egypt on the bank of the Nile by Pachomius. It was a return to a simple lifestyle of work, devotion, and obedience for what grew to be seven thousand monks who lived in these monasteries throughout Egypt and Syria (Cairns, 1961).

Monasticism continued to grow and by the sixth century had deep roots and influence on both the Eastern and Western church. As with any temporary movement that becomes permanent or institutionalized, monasticism developed its own problems similar to that of the society from which it had withdrawn. It underwent its own reforms in the tenth and eleven centuries. However, the contributions made by this temporary community movement to the church and society have blessed us to this day. These monasteries, centered on living Christianly, showed society the virtues of a life organized around biblical values. To improve communal life the monasteries experimented in agricultural practices increasing yield of crops and quality of livestock. These practices spread to surrounding communities raising their standard of living. Scripture was held in highest regard with copying and preserving of the precious manuscripts that would have been lost during the Dark Ages. Monastery schools provided education to those in nearby communities and kept academic life alive within. Greek and Latin works of literature were copied and translated. History was recorded by monks during the period of the Dark Ages when few others were recording it because much of urban life had disappeared after the barbarians had overrun the Roman Empire. The poor, sick, and outcasts from society were cared for by the monasteries. From these monasteries came the missionaries of the medieval church with the Friars emerging as a reforming movement of the monasteries in the thirteenth century. The Friars lived among the people rather than in the monasteries to serve them and preach to them in their ordinary language.

However, as important as the monastery movement has been to renewing the church and sustaining society it did drain the church of some of the best leadership of that era. It also promoted dualistic thinking concerning morality in that the monks lived at a level not expected of the ordinary person. This higher standard became a temptation to pride and a religion based on one's efforts as opposed to grace. As greater wealth was acquired by the monasteries due to communal sharing and values of thrift, laziness as well as gluttony and greed crept into the monastic system as it had in the Roman Church that had originally been cause of the monastic movement.

Our current camp, conference center, outdoor center, and retreat center movement grew out of similar needs to "come apart" for preaching, teaching, spiritual renewal, and, on occasion, church reform. Communication before electricity was slow as was travel before the railroad and automobile. Villages were often few and far between with people living on the fringes. Days were long and filled with needed work to subsist. When a traveling evangelist came through, it became an occasion for people to gather together. These gatherings often occurred outside of villages in encampments as there were usually limited rooms for people to stay in the

villages (Anderson, 1979). If the villages were fortunate enough, they were able to keep these preachers returning year after year and eventually set up annual encampments or camps and conference centers with tabernacles large enough to hold these regular meetings. An example of this is George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, who in 1663 came from England to America to preach along the shore of the Chesapeake Bay and attracted 1,000 people who pitched 200 tents for at least one four-day preaching session according to one account (Eells, 1986). He returned again at a later time to do the same. Hence, the beginnings of the modern Christian camping and conference center movement with a focus on coming apart for renewal and recommitment in a temporary community setting apart from the busyness and routines of life.

Camping/Temporary Community Dynamics as Distinct From the Permanent Community

Whereas the local church represents the universal church as the more permanent community of the body of Christ functioning within a local community, camp represents the local churches and the universal church as temporary communities of believers gathered together for specific purposes connected to personal and corporate renewal and growth. Lloyd Mattson has called camps, "the church at work outdoors" (Mattson, 1984, p. 9). When the local church temporarily meets outside of its permanent community to carry on aspects of its ministry it usually does so without the ecclesiastical structures that normally perpetuate its ministry in its permanent setting as well as without the constraints of the permanent community that could interfere with change.

Camp/temporary community purposes are usually focused on special needs of the church that cannot be met as well in the permanent community. These needs often require a concentrated block of time to be fully addressed and some distance from daily routines of life and pressures that can distract from focused concentration on these needs. Camps may also have resources that are not usually available in the permanent communities that help facilitate the addressing of these special needs.

Camp/temporary communities have specific dynamics and environmental qualities that are different from the permanent community. These qualities and dynamics can enhance the facilitation of change and allow the Holy Spirit to work more freely in that setting and the individual to be more capable of sensing the Spirit speaking to him or her.

The camp/temporary community can remove barriers to change. People in the permanent community sometimes make it difficult to change. Peer groups and friends have a great influence on one another. This influence can be both bad and good. Research on smoking, drug use, high risk, and anti-social behavior has shown the power of peers in influencing bad behavior. Studies on recidivism of released prisoners have shown that those ex-offenders who return to their communities and peers where they lived when they committed their crimes, had a higher degree of recidivism.

The expectations others have of a person can limit their growth or encourage it. As an example, controlled studies have shown that teachers who are told false information about the academic quality of their new students will affect the performance of those students by their expectations regardless of actual abilities of those students (Pygmalion effect). A student with a low aptitude for academic work may far exceed their ability if the teacher has been told they have high level of academic ability. The reverse is true of students with high ability if the teacher has been told that they have little academic potential.

People struggling with addictions or sinful habits may have others that encourage them in that behavior. The notion of co-dependency grew out of a realization that some people do not care to assist another person in becoming free from their addictive behavior because they desire that person to be dependent upon them. The same dynamic exists with some parents who want their children to continue to be dependent on them. They often do this by micro-managing their lives and making all of their decisions for them. Sometimes this occurs in a marriage or in the employer-employee relationship. Any relationship can become a co-dependent relationship that hinders growth. The camp/temporary community can remove both the human barrier factor of co-dependency or sources that create low expectations for change.

The camp/temporary community can also remove social structures that are barriers to change. Roles are often well defined in the permanent community. A person entering a new community where little is known of their background is very free to take on new

roles not expected or permitted of them in their permanent community. Even persons attending a temporary community experience with persons from their permanent community may find freedom to try on new roles if the temporary community experience is a novel experience in an environment different from their permanent community. Hierarchical structures with rigid age and professional qualifications do not often allow room for youth or even adult laypersons to try leadership roles within the local church essential for new leadership to emerge. These structural barriers can be removed or bypassed in the camp/temporary community.

The physical and social isolation of the camp/temporary community can remove influences and interruptions that can be barriers to change. Everywhere around us are verbal and visual messages that beg to be heard, seen, or read. Many of these messages carry values implicitly or explicitly that are in antithesis to Christian beliefs. They are designed to be highly persuasive to encourage the purchase of a product or adopt a way of thinking or an image that will result in action. Many of these carriers of these messages such as magazines, video games, television, internet, iPhone, movies, theater, etc., can be removed in the camp/temporary community. However, as in every gathering of human beings, these anti-Christian values are brought to the community by persons themselves who hold to these values.

Life consists of many varied interactions with our environment and people. We cannot manage all of these interactions. Those that interfere with our goals for that day are viewed as interruptions. They can rob us of precious time and energy to accomplish what we need or want to accomplish or they can get us off track and pull us in directions that we do not want to go. How can we manage these interruptions? The camp/temporary community can insulate us from many of those interruptions. We can physically be out of reach from people who may distract us from full engagement in the temporary community experience. And camp can help us become electronically free for that period of time.

Routines and daily duties of life can also be a barrier of change. Many times we desire to follow through a course of action we would like to take but we do not have enough time. The daily burdens and routines of life can be left behind when we enter the camp/temporary community experience resulting in a change of pace and time for extended concentration without other imposing tasks. This frees the participant from using energy in ways not productive to the goals of the temporary experience, thereby allowing more energy to be focused on the goals at hand.

Routines help us lock in or fix our habits. If our habits are unproductive, the routines of life make it difficult to change those habits. As an example, if I am accustomed to watching a late evening television program daily I may find it difficult to start the day in God's word especially if my work day begins early. My routines are set and comfortable to me and form daily habits that are hard to break. Therefore, I may find it difficult to make other similar changes at home because my routines are so well set. The camp/temporary community setting can help free the person from routine reinforced habits so that new habits can be established and hopefully become imbedded in routines at home.

Time has a tendency to be viewed differently with a fresh dynamic as daily routines with fixed schedules are left behind. One often feels like they are living in the psychological present with time becoming more current-event oriented than future oriented. Future problems are easier to leave behind in a setting that is more present oriented. In this present-oriented psychological state, experiences and relationships are more meaningful and more deeply felt. The task at hand can be pursued with increased attentiveness. This increased attentiveness to task allows one to gain a greater understanding of themselves in relationship to the subject of discussion, the persons they are with, or process in which they are engaged. One's senses are heightened to take in the new surroundings and people. There may be more awareness of detail. The effect of this is a greater propensity to carefully observe, learn, and retain what was learned. It also allows one the opportunity to see one's self in new ways. This psychological state can open the person to the option of making helpful changes in one's life.

Just the anticipation of coming to a new environment and anticipating doing new and different things naturally opens the person to growth and change even in areas that they have been resistant to at home. Seeing other people trying new things and discussing new ideas and concepts is stimulating and encourages one to do the same. Even old, unquestioned attitudes and values are

open to examination and change when free from the usual circumstances that have generated these attitudes and sustained them. As an example of this is the way that prejudices can be broken down in the camp community. Racial prejudices engendered in young children have been shown to fade when children with these prejudices have lived together in the same camp dorm and played together in the same activity setting. Likewise children and adults who have ignored the Christian message before coming to camp, have been more open to accepting Christ at camp just because it is the place where new experiences are the norm and others are trying new things.

Whereas life in small communities often prevents us from hiding behind a mask the longer we live in that community, most people live in large metropolitan areas where they may work in one community, live in another, and go to church in another community. This fragmented social structure makes it easier to hide behind a mask. And when the mask slips and the hidden self is revealed, it is fairly easy to change churches or change jobs. However, living close together in an intentional temporary community impels one into relationships that quickly deepen and become more intimate as concentrated time is spent together. In this highly interactive, more intimate and supportive setting it may be easier for the mask to be removed or it may slip or be pulled to the side to offer an opportunity for growth. The deeper the supportive relationship, the more one is willing to risk and share personal desires and needs. The courage to change comes from the support of others who understand and accept us and are desirous of seeing us grow into more mature and effective Christians. The camp/temporary community can foster supportive relationships for change.

Temporary community experiences seem to follow a pattern similar to most group experiences. There is the getting to know you time, the struggling forward stage, the effective functioning stage, and the stage of closure and celebration and/or mourning as the temporary community experience ends. Each stage may differ in length or could be bypassed if the group was intact before the temporary community experience. However, the temporal aspect of the group experience begs the participant to become engaged so as to not be left out thereby missing the essence of the experience which to most is the effectively functioning stage followed by a celebration of what was accomplished together.

Due to this limited time frame and group dynamic, an interesting phenomenon exists in most temporary community experiences related to the way individuals and the groups as a whole expend their energy during these usual stages in the temporary community experience. There seems to be a common understanding of the limitation of time to accomplish a task or acquire the experiences offered in a retreat or camp and the participants seem to pace themselves to accomplish the goals of the retreat or acquire the experiences that they desire. The pace is always adjusted and intensified at the right time to insure the task is accomplished or goals are met no matter the length of time. This assists the participant who may have been procrastinating to make those decisions or accomplish those tasks to do so before the temporary experience ends. The temporary community experience often frees and then impels the person into decisions and commitments, many of which would not have been made in the permanent community setting.

Camp/temporary community experiences have an advantage over permanent community experiences in that they can be single focused around certain goals or outcomes desired. Everything that happens during a temporary community experience can be planned to achieve the purposes desired for that experience. Even the site itself can be designed to best reflect the values related to the purpose of that experience. As an example, if the purpose of the temporary community experience is to learn more of the creative goodness and beauty of God in order to enjoy Him in a deeper way, God's creation could be carefully highlighted throughout the entire site so that wherever one looked he could not avoid seeing the awesomeness of God reflected in His handiwork. If the camp's purpose was to provide opportunity for personal reflection, spaces for isolated solitude could be provided throughout the camp. If the purpose was to develop deep relationships within a small group, the living accommodations, dining facilities, and activities could be centered around small groups living, playing, and working together. If interdependency within a small group was a goal, the way food is served could affect that desired outcome as well as the communal living duties that could be assigned and shared by the group. Even the type of person assigned to each small group could be structured for the purposes of the temporary experience. If the purpose

was evangelism, an ideal ratio of non-believers to believers could be set to allow for a critical mass of believers for effective modeling and discussions. If the purpose was intergenerational and cross-cultural interaction, those ratios could be preset.

Ecclesiastical structures of the local church are the culture of that church or denomination that is dependent upon the doctrinal position and history of the church. These structures can facilitate worship and church functioning but can also stifle spiritual growth and emergence of new leadership if not understood, reminded as to their significance, or reinterpreted to each new generation. Form should follow function and beliefs. However, form is often disconnected from function or beliefs and may become a hindrance to belief or function. The temporary community experience has the opportunity to leave certain ecclesiastical or cultural structures behind or place them in a fresh context whereby they can be better understood and used as a means to serve function and/or beliefs.

The same is true of power structures that can hinder community life. People who hold positions of power and leadership are often distanced from those who do not have those esteemed roles or positions of power. The body of Christ is to be free from issues of status that values people more highly for their position rather than their worth as a child of God. Pastoral staff and elders by virtue of their position and power attributed to that position may not be able to relate as well to many in their own permanent church community as they will be able to in the temporary community where power structures are mitigated. Temporary community experiences that place everyone together in a more egalitarian environment where power is shared can break down barriers for community building. Several factors cause this power shift. The congregations see the pastoral staff and elders primarily in their roles within the church whereas in the temporary community those roles are usually mixed with other necessary community roles such as parenting, serving basic needs of one another such as serving food, cleaning up, playing together, etc. These church leaders are seen more as real people and their authority more related to how they serve and live out their beliefs rather than the position they hold.

Camp/temporary community experiences have lasting impact on people's lives. Because they are discrete experiences, they are not easily forgotten. Our everyday lives have their peak moments but are in general lost in our memories because they are routine. However, those who participate in a camp/temporary community experience will not easily forget that experience. Why? It is different from the ordinary. It is usually intense and focused on a clear purpose. It is new in many ways with new people, a new place, and new activities. Combine all this with good programming that creates high-impact, memory-making experiences and deep relationships and it will forever stand out from most other experiences. And, if carefully crafted with much prayer for the Holy Spirit to work and embellished with God's word and living role-models of Christ-likeness, every time that the camp/temporary community experience comes to mind, and that may be often, along with those peak memories will come a flood of images of Godly leaders, passages of significant Scripture, songs of worship, and commitments that were made in that camp/temporary community experience.

What has been effectively done in that camp/temporary community experience is the creation of a personal story imbedded within a group story. Our personal stories are treasures that each of us holds and would like someone to share with us. Camp/temporary communities can allow us to do just that. They allow us to share our stories with others, and, even better, to create a common story that we can all share and enjoy. Stories can be powerful conveyors of messages and the camp/temporary community can imbed those messages within those stories. These messages can be the Word of God proclaimed directly from Scripture, or written into song, or incarnated in the lives of many camp leaders and fellow campers. And as we live alongside of fellow campers in an unfolding story we add these stories with the biblical messages to our stories. We not only add these stories but we are able to compare our stories to the biblical story provided through various means. The bible is mainly narrative for the benefit of our easily identifying with the gospel message through connecting with stories about others like ourselves. When we focus on the biblical story and compare our stories to it, we are led by the Holy Spirit to respond and grow in maturity in our faith and behavior.

Camp not only provides the biblical story to inform our story but also allows us to put into practice our faith response to the biblical story and newly formed behavior. Unlike other settings, we have concentrated and uninterrupted time together with our mentors and counselors who can guide us in this process of growth in faith and application of our faith to life.

A well planned camp/temporary ministry will allow for progressive programming to reach deeper into knowledge and experiences that will lead a person to greater maturity in faith and life. This ministry must be developmentally related and work with the current developmental needs of the participant. To do so effectively, the camp/temporary community must be in partnership with parents, churches, and educational/developmental programs in the permanent communities of the participants.

Camps as Parachurch Organizations

History shows us how easy it is for organizations to run a cycle from an effective movement to smoothly functioning institution and then declining momentum and lethargy until both the vision and energy have been lost leaving an empty shell. The parachurch seems to have risen in part to check that decline and renew the institutional church (Fraser, 1986). The parachurch is a ministry organization that functions outside of the control or authority of the church. The parachurch traditionally provides specialized ministries to fill the gap where the church does not have the resources or has become weak or ineffective (Willmer, 1998). With declining church participation of youth as they move toward adulthood, the church has struggled with ways to reverse this trend. Rather than waiting for youth to find their way to the church, the parachurch has taken the church to them and attempted to reconnect the young with the adult world. "They stress wholesome fun, sports and warm mentoring relationships tied to Bible study and a personal relationship with Jesus.... Their staffers are alternative models to the entertainment industry's portrayal of adolescence and adulthood, and they act as a buffer between youngsters and Hollywood, their parents, and the unsavory sides of school" (Charry, 2001). This describes the role of most parachurch organizations working with youth including camps.

Camps as a whole can be characterized as parachurch organizations. Many function apart from the church but "along side of" (para) the church. Like many parachurch organizations they exist in theory to work for the local church but often have no ties to any local churches other than staff who attend local churches or members of local churches who attend their programs or send their children or grandchildren. Some camps claim to serve the local church but in reality are seen as competitors to the local church often drawing resources from the local church and giving back little or nothing to its ministry.

Organizations such as the Salvation Army, who also run camps, consider themselves a church thereby bypassing the issue of parachurch. This is advantageous for them when it comes to government regulation in certain countries where churches are exempt from laws that are binding on most not-for-profit organizations such as equal employment opportunity irregardless of religion or sexual orientation.

Some camps attempt to distance themselves from the classification of parachurch by stating that they do not exist for the sake of the church but for the family or for youth or for adults in transition, etc. But if they are not ultimately working for the church, who are they working for? In reality, if they are a part of the body of Christ which is the church and conducting their programs on the basis of biblical principles, they are working for the same purposes as the church and are a parachurch organization by definition unless they are under the authority of a local church or group of churches.

What confounds the notion of how a parachurch functions in behalf of the church is the frame of reference of what is considered the local church. In our high technology communications society that is also extremely mobile, our frame of reference has shifted from geography to sphere of influence (Gration, 1984). Local may not mean in the same local community but in another community where members of the church commute to form their church community. Or in the extreme, it could be an electronic extension of a local church with infrequent or no physical contact between members yet participation in many of the functions ascribed to the church. Many large churches televise their services nationally and internationally to have a broader reach to their ministry and many use the internet as an extension of their ministries. If our sphere of influence becomes our only frame of reference where is the incarnational aspect of the church, and, more specifically, the physical presence of Christ's disciples indwelt by the Holy Spirit doing kingdom work in their local community? Furthermore, what functions of the church would be incomplete because the

body of Christ is not there working together to perform those functions using their unique spiritual gifts? Are sufficient functions being carried on by that sphere of influence to define it as a local church?

The following table attempts to list the predominate biblical functions of the local church and determine which of those functions could be performed by the camp/temporary community:

Church Functions	Could the Camp/Temporary Community Exercise These Church Functions and to What Degree?
Meets together regularly for worship and encouragement of the people of faith. (Acts 9:31, 11:22, 26)	Could do so for the permanent staff of a camp but guests/campers return to their permanent communities after their camp experience. Can the camp still be the church for those who return home? A camp has other functions beyond meeting together regularly for worship and fellowship. Are these other functions church related?
Provides discipline to its members. (Matt.18:15-17, 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 12)	Could do so but the camp is also bound by laws of the state that legislate hiring and firing practices that attempt to promote fair practices and guard against various forms of discrimination. A church is exempt from most laws that conflict with religious beliefs and practices but not-for-profit religious charitable organizations such as camps have less latitude to exercise discipline to its employees. Scripture seems to give the church special authority to perform this function. Is the camp a church?
Rebukes those who sin. (1Tim. 5:20)	Could do so but fear of loss of income as a business and retaliation by the employee may lessen desire to do so. Could the local church do this better?
Is the group that believers should turn to in order to resolve a dispute. (1 Cor. 6:1-6)	Employees may fear loss of job or status within an organization because conflicting interest as both a paid employee and member of the body of Christ. Will not the appointed arbitrators of the local church be less biased?
Provides for those who are needy in the church. (Acts 4:35, 1 Tim. 5:3)	Usually not the mission of the camp but camp could provide scholarship help for the needy and take care of its own staff through a benefit package and sharing of resources by other employees. Is the local church in a better position to do this through its members and deacons?
Is to be inclusive of all believers no matter their ethnic, socio-economic, or racial background. (Acts 11:18-21)	Unless camps specifically target the poor and/or desire racial or ethnic diversity and also raise funds to support this goal, this does not happen. Camps have to pay their bills like any business and most camps cater to people and groups who can pay their camper day costs that fit into their predominant racial and ethnic background. Could the local church do this better and more completely?
Commissions missionaries and ministers of the gospel. (Acts 13:2,3)	Camps can be a commissioning and sending body but only the full-time staff remain to holistically support and encourage those commissioned and sent. Few camps have been effective in doing this long term but some have been effective in short-term missions. Could the local church be more effective in doing this?
Appoints workers to administer to the physical needs of those in the church such as poor and widows. (Acts 6:3, 4, 1 Tim. 3:8-13)	Could do so but that role is usually formalized as a human resources director and not a volunteer role such as deacons in the church. Is this a role that a camp would want to take on for all who attend its programs or is it better left for a local church?
Appoints godly elders to oversee the ministry of the church as "shepherds of the church of God." (Acts 20:28, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4)	A camp board, director, and administrative staff is the formal structure required by most governments for chartered not-for-profit organizations and these leaders are not appointed by the church. The role of elders as shepherds of the church is more of a servant's role dealing with modeling and promoting Christian formation through sound doctrine and not a business organization role regulated by corporate law. Should a camp oversee a local church ministry at the camp? Could the local church/churches oversee a camping ministry?
Takes care of its elders and provides for their needs as they serve the church. (1 Tim. 5:17-18)	Camps can appoint and employ chaplains and people who lead the discipling process and provide overall spiritual guidance for their camp ministries. Are these roles the same as those of the elders of a local church?
Prays for the sick and anoints them with oil when requested.	Usually the job of elders of the church as specified in James 5:14, 15. Should camp leaders take on this role?
Guards the purity of the faith while affirming the immutables and carefully considering how non-essentials should be treated. (Acts 15:6-19)	Most camps have a statement of faith and standards of conduct that are derived from Scripture that act as a screening device for staff. However, most of these statements and standards are borrowed from other organizations or churches and not examined within the organization by qualified biblical teachers or scholars as would a church or group of churches (denominations). Who should be the authority in determining

	the immutables and guarding the purity of the faith?
Exercises special gifts to edify the believers when they meet together. (1 Cor. 12:27-31, 14:12, 26)	Spiritual gifts could be recognized and exercised to edify believers in a camp setting. Is the local church or camp any different is this function?
Seeks peace as members of one body.	This goal can be pursued in a camp and anywhere that believers are gathered; however, could the local church be better equipped to carry on this task?
Teaches God's Word.	Could be done effectively in a camp setting but would a long-term impact be better attained through the local church?
Admonishes its members to follow these teachings.	Could be done effectively in a camp setting but would not follow-up on its guests better be done in a local community church setting where they live?
Incorporates singing of psalms, hymns, and songs with gratitude into its times of meeting. (Col.3:15-17; 1 Cor. 2:42)	Could be done effectively in a camp setting and local church.
Remembers those who are suffering for the sake of the gospel. (Col. 4:18)	Could be done effectively in a camp setting. Could this be done more consistently and effectively in the local church?
Helps other churches with their needs. (Acts 11:27-30, 2 Cor. 8:19, 9:5).	Could be done through effective programming designed for specific needs of churches. Are local churches themselves better equipped in helping other local churches with their needs, especially in church related matters and financial needs?
Partner with Christ in building the church and bringing each member to full maturity in the faith. (Eph. 4:11-13)	Could be done in part through effective programming designed for specific needs of churches such as a setting for introducing seekers to the gospel or dealing with issues hindering community building. Would not the local church be better prepared for church planting and long-term process of bringing members to maturity in Christ?
Administers sacraments of baptism and communion. (1 Cor. 11:17-34)	Could be a site where this takes place. Who is to administer the sacraments? Is this the responsibility of the local church and those designated as overseers?
Church has the privilege of being Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation.	Could join with the church in being Christ's ambassadors though whom the message of reconciliation is proclaimed. Where are ambassadors most effective? Can the local church be more effective because of its corporate, long-term witness in the local community?
Church shows forth His kingdom to the world.	The camp could show forth evidence of the kingdom of God by consistently living according to God's will as an intentional community. Does the local church have a greater ability?

As can be seen in the above table, camp ministries could perform many of the functions of a local church but cannot be the local church for those groups and individuals who are not local to the camp or who cannot afford to pay the guest fees to attend the camp ministries on a regular basis. The camp could become a local church that runs a camping ministry but the difference between a fee-based camping ministry and a voluntary religious organization such as a church could cause confusion and be a conflict of interest especially for those who would work for and serve as members of the same organization.

Tensions Between the Parachurch (camps) and the Church

One of the earliest parachurch organizations was the monastery and it took the Roman Catholic Church almost a thousand years to define the relationship between the church and monastery even to the point of dissolving the Jesuits at one time. Ralph Winter (1974) sees the church as having greater diversity and greater objectivity in thinking and strategizing as well as greater overall perspective but less mobility for action whereas the parachurch would have a greater potential mobility and efficiency and a more specific focus in purpose. He feels that both the parachurch and the church are needed for a healthy functioning of "the Christian movement." He believes that they are interdependent and each not complete without the other. Yet accountability must exist of the parachurch to the church. Without the constant emergence of new groups or "orders" the Roman church would not have survived into the high medieval period. These parachurch "orders" continued the renewal process through that period of church history to the present. Winter argues that these checks and balances are a social phenomenon that are found in all aspects of society and it is only logical that the parachurch has risen as a check and balance to the local church to facilitate this renewal process of the institutional church.

On the far extreme, Howard Snyder (1975) sees both the parachurch and the local church with its ecclesiastical structures as useful tools but culturally bound. To him, the church or "community of God's people" is the only cross-culturally relevant form of the

church. Both the para-ecclesiastical (para-church) and ecclesiastical structures exist alongside the church but are not themselves the church.

If the parachurch is not the church but exists in behalf of the church, it should only exist so long as it is fulfilling its function for the church that the church is unable or unwilling to undertake. It should not only be fulfilling a specific function but motivating the church to take on that function and equipping those in the church to effectively take on that function. But who is to be the judge as to whether the function of the parachurch is still needed and valid. This decision ultimately must reflect the interests of the church and requires some sort of working relationship between the parachurch and the church. It seems logical that the parachurch mission statement should include a statement of support of the church as a part of its overall mission. And it seems logical that the parachurch should have strong connections to the local church or churches to guide its supportive ministry of the church.

What the parachurch does well that churches struggle with is working together with a variety of churches of differing doctrinal and polity positions. It allows churches to function within their own faith traditions while working together to meet common needs in areas where doctrine or polity are not issues. Camps owned by churches and denominations have become common grounds for ministry by many varied faith traditions expressing a spiritual unity across denominational lines. However, the tension rises when parachurch ministries, with camps being a prime example, have weak relationships with the church.

Camps or camping ministries that do not have strong relationships with local churches are not only hindering their ministry with those who attend their programs but also are affecting the ministries of local churches. When campers return to their homes, they need to be transitioned to a local church to continue their growth that took place at camp. Local churches need youth or adults who have come to know Christ to add to their impact in the local community. Discipleship is a life-long, ongoing process given to the local body of believers. It is not a short term, temporary community experience that occurs once or twice a year. A camp ministry cannot meet all of the needs of the camper in the time allotted for any of the programs offered. Furthermore, a camp that has strong ties to local churches and takes the time to communicate the type and extent of its ministry to the local churches in communities that send campers can make that transition more effective for both the church and the camper. Strong partnerships between the local church and the camp are most effective in building the body of Christ. "The church is the only practical means of maintaining the spiritual momentum begun at camp" (Mattson, 1984).

Parachurch organizations exist not only because there are needs that the church is ill equipped or desires not to address but also because of a growing clericalism and a rigid hierarchical structure that leaves little room in the church for skilled and motivated laypersons who see the need to create a ministry to meet an unmet need through the local church. These skilled laypersons move outside to the church and often create their own focused ministry. Once functioning outside of the church both financial and human resources are shifted from the local church to support that parachurch ministry. Camps having their own sites require tremendous financial resources to develop their sites and run their programs. Most of this comes from individuals and not the church. If parachurch organizations had to rely on the church for financial support, they would never have come into existence. This loss of leadership and financial resources is often seen as a threat to the church, and rightly so, since few people have the time and energy to maintain strong leadership roles in both a parachurch organization and the church. Camps have a further attraction to the motivated layperson in that they are also equipping ministries and equipping ministries are often lacking in the local church with a professional clergy model.

Where does all of this lead us in how we as people in camping should relate to the local church? The church, not the parachurch, is God's ordained vehicle for growing the body of Christ, the church itself. And the church ideally should be in the process of renewing itself from within. How can the parachurch assist the church in performing these needed functions?

Possible Contribution of Camps/Temporary Communities to the Local Church

Camps like most parachurch groups become highly qualified in working in specialized aspects of ministry that can complement the ministry of the local church:

1. Camp ministry is a holistic ministry combining the body (activity), mind (expanding one's view of the world from a Christian perspective), and spirit (touching the heart of the person as it connects relationally to others and Christ). Rather than just the mind and/or heart that is often the predominant ministry of the local church, camp can effectively minister to the whole person while affecting lifestyle and teach the church how to do so.
2. Camp ministry is time rich in that it fills a block of time with connected, purposeful experiences that are designed to move the participant progressively toward full maturity in Christ by applying what has been previously learned. It provides a venue through which the camper can be continually observed and guided in the application of the Christian faith to life and thereby complements the ministry of the church in a busy world where time is most usually fragmented into short segments. Camp can sharpen the discipleship process of the church in showing ways in which teachers and mentors can guide their disciples into application of the Christian faith to life.
3. Camp ministry can be an effective tool to help build lay leaders for the church in that all camp programs are leader dependent and equipping intensive.
4. Camp ministry can build healthy community and deepen wholesome relationships providing both a vision of Christian community to the camper to pursue at home and also tools to assist them in becoming a part of a healthy community in their local church. Furthermore, Christian camp leaders can assist the local churches that they are apart of in developing deeper Christian communities.
5. Camp ministry can provide models and mentors for younger people and younger adults to follow and can encourage those types of relationships to continue in the local church.
6. Camp ministry can remove the permanent community barriers so that change can more easily take place. It can provide the opportunity for the Spirit to work more effectively by removing some of the tools from Satan's toolbox that those in the permanent community have to contend with on a daily basis.
7. Camp ministry can expose needs easily hidden at home and provide concentrated time to begin working on those needs in the context of a supportive community.
8. Camp ministry, usually done in an outdoor environment, can be enhanced by the beauty and wonder of God's creation declaring the creativity, power, and care of the God who created us (Rom. 1:20).
9. Camp leaders because of their specialization in working with short-term ministries in temporary community settings become experts in that genre of ministry and can be excellent resources for improving other related ministries of the local church. They also become experts in working within demographic niches with their cultural baggage such as middle-class youth, corporate management (a growing sector in camps with challenge courses), career women, pastors, etc. They could become active leaders in their own local church and use their knowledge and experience in short-term ministries and special demographic niches to enrich their local church ministries.
10. Camp leaders can provide assistance to the local churches who are doing camping ministries within the local church so that they may be better able to use this tool effectively themselves.
11. Camp leaders can explore ways in which camp/temporary ministries can assist the church in its own renewal.
12. Many decisions are made at camp that perhaps would not be made at home even through excellent ministries of the local church due to the familiarity of the home setting and lack of perceived urgency to make those decisions. The camp/temporary community can be used by the local church to reap the harvest from seeds that were planted in the local church.

13. Camp ministries can locate and develop relationships with churches in communities where their non-Christian campers live and introduce these campers to those churches for follow-up after they return from camp, especially if they began their walk with Christ at camp.
14. The camp/temporary community can clarify and define its relationship to the local church with assistance from the local church or churches and state that relationship in its mission and vision statement (White, 1983). It can make every effort to be an effective arm of local churches and submit to the authority and wisdom of the local churches in how it conducts its ministry and determines the effectiveness of its ministry to the local church.

What the Local Church Can Do For the Camp/Temporary Community

1. The local church can support the ministry of the camp/temporary community by using its ministries where it cannot minister as effectively in its own ministries within the permanent community.
2. The local church should attempt to include local camp/temporary community leaders on its ministry leadership team to not only enrich its own ministries but build into these leaders insights into local church ministries that would allow them to complement these local church ministries and be more effective in their support of the local church.
3. The local church could view camp/temporary community ministries as training ministries for future leaders of the church, use the camp for some of the training for equipping future leaders, and make room for them in the local church ministries to continue that growth after they have ministered in the camp/temporary community setting.
4. Since the camp/temporary community ministry is to support the ministry of the local church and act as an agent for renewal of the local church, the local church should carefully study the dynamics and programming of successful camp/temporary community ministries and adapt them to the local church setting.
5. The local church should financially support camp/temporary community ministries and encourage church members to volunteer their time as workers, leaders, and board members of local camp/temporary community ministries (White, 1983).
6. When conflicts arise within camp/temporary community ministries, the local church should volunteer wise counsel to help settle those disputes.
7. Since the camp/temporary community ministries are unable to adequately follow-up on past participants in their ministries, the church should work with camp/temporary ministries attended by their members and establish a way in which these youth and adults can be followed-up and linked effectively into the local church ministries building upon the growth that has taken place in the camp/temporary community experience.
8. Local churches should clarify and define their relationships and responsibilities to parachurch organizations and communicate those relationships to parachurch organizations that they use and/or support (White, 1983).
9. Local churches should assist parachurch ministries in defining their relationship to the local church and encourage them to include that relationship in their mission and vision statements.
10. When a parachurch ministry seems to be losing its effectiveness in supporting the ministry of the local church, the local church should confront the leadership of the parachurch ministry and suggest modification or termination of that ministry (White, 1983).

The Church – One Generation From Extinction

Who are we as Christians? We are much loved children as a part of the family of God and greatly rewarded in being given the greatest commission to share the gospel to all people in all nations and to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). How are we going to do this? We are to use every means possible to make disciples (I Cor. 9:22, 23) and the camp/temporary community is and has been one of the venues that God has used over the history of man. However, the permanent and primary means for making disciples has always been the church, the permanent community of believers worldwide who are represented in each local community in the local church.

Biblical statements and church history seems to indicate that the camp/temporary community has been a tool to help renew the church and assist it in making disciples. As camp leaders we become elated with the decisions that are made in camps and the number of campers and staff who move into full-time Christian ministry¹ but we often forget that the local church is the permanent instrument performing the main function of building disciples. Camps do have unique dynamics that can assist the work of the Holy Spirit and provide the isolation from worldly distractions and the time to go in-depth into ministry in our “place apart.” But we must admit that our ministry is only temporary and the real test of our ministry is what happens back home where a camper must live out those decisions. It can be harder there and we are not there. Our only hope is the local church.

The prime responsibility of the church is to bring the disciple to maturity in faith (Eph. 4:12, 13). As camp leaders we can cooperate with the local church in this discipleship process and we can help the church in the process of building future leaders for ministry within the local church and for the kingdom of God.

If the great commission was not taken seriously and future leaders were not equipped for the local church and the kingdom of God, it would go into extinction. History has shown us that it can happen as it has happened in regions of the world that were once fervently Christian. Our choice is to work closely with the local church which is representative of the church universal in communities throughout the world and assist in this process of discipleship and equipping leaders or ignore the local church, God’s primary and most effective tool for building the church. Remember, camps are temporary communities, by definition, and we work only temporarily with people who live in permanent communities who make up the local church. The choice is ours. What should CCI associations worldwide do to help member camps make the right choice?

¹ Christian Camping International/USA discovered through their research that approximately 50 percent of those in fulltime ministry had made decisions at camp that influenced their call into fulltime ministry.

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