



MT. CROSS DAY CAMP SITE COORDINATOR HANDBOOK



PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR MT. CROSS DAY CAMP.

What is Mt. Cross Day Camp?

Mt. Cross Day Camp is a partnership between Mt. Cross Ministries and local congregations designed to provide a vibrant, faith-formative program that nurtures relationships, builds community, and extends outreach to the wider neighborhood.

Each Day Camp blends the excitement of a summer camp with the accessibility of a local church setting. Programs are high-energy, relational, and flexible—similar in format to Vacation Bible School, but with the added leadership of trained Mt. Cross staff. Together, Mt. Cross staff and congregational volunteers create a safe and engaging environment where children grow in faith, friendship, and confidence.

Mt. Cross staff lead worship, games, music, Bible studies, and recreation, while also equipping congregational volunteers to co-lead and support these activities. This shared ministry not only enriches the week of Day Camp but also strengthens the long-term ministry of the hosting congregation.



Core Commitments of Day Camp

Relational:

- Mt. Cross staff work alongside trained and screened congregational volunteers to maintain safe supervision ratios.
- In alignment with American Camp Association (ACA) standards and California childcare regulations, Day Camp requires a minimum adult-to-camper ratio of **1:8**. Younger age groups may require lower ratios.
- This ratio ensures individualized attention, camper safety, and meaningful intergenerational ministry.

Renewal:

- Day Camp renews and energizes adult volunteers, campers, and the congregation's wider ministry.
- It can revitalize Sunday School or children's programming by providing new ideas, leadership support, and sustainable practices that continue beyond the camp week.

Outreach:

- Day Camp extends the congregation's ministry into the surrounding community by welcoming children and families from outside the congregation.
- Hosting churches are encouraged to invite other local congregations or community partners to join, making the experience ecumenical and community-centered.

Why Day Camp?

The purpose of Day Camp is to help congregations provide a safe, faith-based, and developmentally appropriate program for children in their community. Partnering with Mt. Cross offers:

- **Trained Staff:** Mt. Cross staff are carefully selected, background-checked, and trained in child development, risk management, health and safety, inclusive ministry, and program leadership.
- **Dynamic Christian Community:** Staff model authentic faith, lead meaningful activities, and create a community where children feel safe, valued, and connected.
- **Flexible Program Design:** Each Day Camp is tailored to meet the unique needs of the congregation and community. Mt. Cross staff collaborate with local leaders before, during, and after camp to ensure the program reflects the mission and values of the host congregation.



Program Essentials for Day Camp

Each Mt. Cross Day Camp follows a structured schedule that balances faith formation, recreation, creativity, and community-building. The following components are core to the daily program:

1. Alpha/Omega (Opening and Closing Worship):

- Each day begins and ends with an interactive worship experience using Scripture, song, prayer, and drama.
- Congregational pastors and staff are encouraged to participate in ways that connect the camp experience with the life of the church.

2. Bible Study:

- Campers meet in small groups led by Mt. Cross staff and trained adult volunteers.
- Lessons use age-appropriate Bible stories, experiential learning, and group activities to connect faith with daily life.

3. Music:

- Music is integrated throughout the program, both in worship and in dedicated sessions.
- Mt. Cross staff teach songs that are engaging, theologically sound, and accessible for children of all ages.

4. Recreation:

- Campers engage in fun, active, non-competitive games that are developmentally appropriate.
- Activities emphasize teamwork, inclusion, and safety in alignment with ACA standards.

5. Arts & Crafts:

- Creative projects reinforce the daily theme and provide a tangible way for campers to share their experience with their families.
- Congregations provide supplies, while Mt. Cross staff supply project ideas and curriculum.

6. Devotions/Rest:

- A quiet, reflective time for campers to process what they learned during the day.
- Activities may include journaling, storytelling, guided reflection, or art.

7. Lunch:

- Each camper brings a sack lunch from home. Congregations provide drinks and snacks.
- Mt. Cross staff eat meals with campers to strengthen relationships. Congregations are asked to provide lunches for staff during camp days.

8. Closing (Daily Wrap-Up):

- Each day ends with music, review of the day's theme, and a joyful send-off.

Sample Daily Schedule (Full-Day Model)

8:30 a.m. Staff & Volunteer Planning Meeting

9:00 a.m. Alpha (Opening Worship)

9:30 a.m. Bible Study

10:15 a.m. Snack (healthy, allergy-safe)

10:30 a.m. Recreation
11:15 a.m. Arts & Crafts
12:00 p.m. Lunch
12:30 p.m. Devotions/Rest
1:00 p.m. Afternoon Adventure Time
2:30 p.m. Omega (Closing Worship)
3:00 p.m. Staff & Volunteer Debrief

Afternoon Adventure Time (1:00–2:30 p.m.)

Afternoon activities provide variety, adventure, and service. Mt. Cross staff lead three of the sessions, while congregations help plan the remaining two. Suggested structure:

- **Monday:** All-Camp Game & Team Building (Mt. Cross staff)
- **Tuesday:** Archery (Mt. Cross staff; conducted only with trained staff and ACA safety protocols)
- **Wednesday:** Hike Day (congregation volunteers; local trails/parks with appropriate permissions and safety planning)
- **Thursday:** Water Day (Mt. Cross staff and congregation volunteers; lifeguard and water safety standards followed)
- **Friday:** Interactive Day (church-led; local field trip or service project)

Weekly Schedule Overview

Sunday: Staff arrive, planning meeting with congregation, staff settle into host homes.

Monday–Friday:

- 8:30 a.m. Staff & Volunteer Devotions
- 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Day Camp
- 3:00 p.m. Staff & Volunteer Debrief

Thursday Evening (Optional): Family Celebration Night—closing program, potluck, or ice cream social. This event helps campers share what they learned and invites community members into the congregation’s ministry.

Customizing Your Day Camp

The standard model serves youth entering grades K–5, Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., with a 1:8 adult-to-camper ratio. Variations are possible, but all must comply with ACA supervision standards, Mt. Cross staff agreements, and California safety laws.

Examples of modifications:

1. **Adjusted Length:** Shorter days (9 a.m.–2 p.m.) or a four-day schedule.
2. **Age Expansion:** Adding evening programming (“Night Camp”) for middle and high school youth.
3. **Shared Hosting:** Partnering with nearby congregations to share costs and volunteer responsibilities.
4. **Preschool Inclusion:** Churches may add preschool programming with their own teachers and a half-day schedule. Mt. Cross staff do not lead preschool groups.

5. **Extended Hours for Families:** Congregations may provide supervised care before 9 a.m. or after 3 p.m. using their own screened adult volunteers. Mt. Cross staff are not available outside camp hours.
6. **Campers with Special Needs:**
 - Day Camp is inclusive and supportive of children with disabilities and diverse needs.
 - Congregations must provide one dedicated volunteer per camper requiring extra support.
 - Determinations about safety and appropriateness should be made in consultation with the Mt. Cross Program Director and congregation leadership, always prioritizing camper well-being.

The Role of Mt. Cross Ministries

Staff: Each Day Camp team includes a trained Day Camp Director and 2–4 counselors. Additional staff may be contracted as needed. All staff are background-checked, first aid/CPR certified, and trained in child protection, mandated reporting, and ACA program standards.

Curriculum: Written by Lutheran Outdoor Ministry professionals and rooted in ELCA theology. Includes Bible study, worship, music, crafts, and recreation resources. Congregations provide craft materials.



The Role of the Hosting Congregation

1. Site Requirements:
 - Facilities must meet ACA safety standards and California health codes.
 - Required: immediate access to shelter, restrooms, drinking water, first aid supplies, and telephone.
 - Outdoor spaces (parks, fields) are encouraged but must have adequate shade and restroom access.
2. Food & Housing for Staff:

- Staff are hosted in congregation homes with safe accommodations: private room (not shared with children), bed, access to shower and bathroom.
- Host families provide breakfast. Congregations provide sack lunches and/or dinners.
- Staff are never left responsible for children in host homes.

3. Volunteer Leadership:

- A Local Coordinator organizes volunteers, logistics, and communication.
- Adult volunteer teachers (must be out of high school) lead small groups with Mt. Cross staff.
- Volunteers assist with snacks, crafts, games, and supervision.
- All volunteers working directly with children must be background-checked in accordance with California law and Mt. Cross policy.

4. Insurance:

- Congregations must submit a **certificate of liability insurance** listing Mt. Cross Ministries as additional insured **at least 14 days before camp begins.**

5. Costs:

- Congregations pay the contracted fee in full by the last day of Day Camp.

6. Snacks & Meals:

- Healthy, nut-free, allergy-safe snacks provided by volunteers.
- Special dietary needs must be respected.

7. Publicity:

- Congregations publicize Day Camp using materials provided by Mt. Cross.
- All advertising must clearly identify Mt. Cross Ministries as a program partner.



Registration

All Mt. Cross Day Camp registration is handled online through our secure registration portal:

<https://mtcross.campbrainregistration.com/>

The online registration system gathers all essential information needed to conduct camp safely and in compliance with ACA standards and California law. This includes:

- Camper contact and emergency information
- Health history and medical information
- Permission and release forms
- Authorized pick-up information

Payment for Day Camp:

Mt. Cross does not collect registration fees for individual Day Camps. If a congregation chooses to charge a program fee, the Local Coordinator or appointed committee is responsible for collecting and managing payments directly from families.

T-Shirts: Families may purchase Mt. Cross Day Camp T-shirts directly through the online registration system. This allows the Local Coordinator to have accurate information about sizing and quantities prior to camp.

Early Registration Encouraged: Congregations are encouraged to promote early registration, especially for families who would like a T-shirt. Early sign-ups also give staff and volunteers the best opportunity to prepare for an engaging and safe camp week.

The Unique Roles of the Camp and Congregation

Mt. Cross Camp Staff Commitments

Mt. Cross staff agree to:

- Collaborate with the Local Coordinator to ensure day-to-day planning and decision-making are clearly assigned. One trained Mt. Cross staff member will serve as the on-site Day Camp Director.
- Be present and engaged at all planning sessions and Day Camp events for their full duration.
- Adapt programming in consultation with the Local Coordinator to best serve the hosting congregation and community.
- Prioritize camper safety, know and follow emergency procedures, and model appropriate behavior at all times.
- Follow all policies and procedures in the Mt. Cross Camp Staff Manual and the Day Camp Handbook.

Congregation Commitments

The congregation agrees to:

- Develop a program schedule that reflects the needs and resources of the church and community, and share it with Mt. Cross staff for implementation.
- Select and secure a Day Camp site that meets ACA standards and all applicable local safety requirements.

- Establish emergency procedures consistent with ACA standards and local risk management best practices.
- Appoint a Local Coordinator and recruit the required adult volunteers to meet supervision ratios.
- Provide safe housing for Mt. Cross staff (typically in parish homes, in accordance with Mt. Cross housing guidelines).
- Promote Day Camp broadly within the church and community.
- Manage camper registration, including health forms and any fees (if applicable).
- Coordinate afternoon activities, such as field trips, guest speakers, or special programs, including transportation and logistics.
- Provide lunch and dinner for Mt. Cross staff during the week.

Day Camp Coordinator Commitments

The Day Camp Coordinator agrees to:

- Serve as the liaison between Mt. Cross Ministries and the local church prior to and during Day Camp.
- Be present on-site each day for the full duration of camp. The Coordinator may not lead a Bible study group to allow full focus on oversight.
- Train and equip all volunteers in Day Camp policies, child safety expectations, and program philosophy.
- Oversee camper check-in and check-out daily, and follow up with families of absent campers.
- Ensure the congregation fulfills its outlined responsibilities.
- Submit a written evaluation to Mt. Cross following the conclusion of Day Camp.

Youth Volunteer Helpers

- Must be selected for maturity, patience, faith, and ability to work with children. General invitations to youth groups are discouraged
- Must receive training in Day Camp policies, safety standards, and expectations before serving.
- May only work with children who are at least four grade levels younger than themselves.
- May not be counted toward the 1:8 adult-to-camper supervision ratio, regardless of age or maturity.

Adult Volunteer Teachers

- Must be high school graduates and at least 18 years old.
- Are required to meet the 1:8 adult-to-camper supervision ratio. (see ACA supervision ratios below)
- Must receive training in Day Camp policies and expectations.
- Are expected to attend the Sunday planning meeting before camp begins.
- Work alongside Mt. Cross staff to lead Bible studies, supervise activities, and ensure camper safety.
- Must be present and engaged during all program hours. Substitutes or shared shifts may be arranged if necessary.

Part-Time Volunteers

- Must receive training in Day Camp policies and expectations.
- Typically provide support such as preparing snacks, leading crafts, serving meals, assisting with transportation, or supporting special events.

Guide to Selecting a Day Camp Site

Mt. Cross Ministries encourages all congregations to meet or exceed American Camp Association (ACA) standards. While congregational Day Camps are not required to be ACA-accredited, following these guidelines helps ensure safety, compliance, and a nurturing environment for all participants.

ACA Supervision Ratios (Minimum Standards)

- Ages 4–5: **1 adult per 6 campers**
- Ages 6–8: **1 adult per 8 campers**
- Ages 9–14: **1 adult per 10 campers**
- Ages 15–17: **1 adult per 12 campers**

Required Camper and Staff Information (on-site at all times)

- Full name and age (for all campers and staff under 21)
- Home address and phone number
- Current school grade (if applicable)
- Name, address, and phone number of parent/guardian responsible for the camper
- Emergency contact information (at least two adults reachable during program hours)
- Physician/healthcare provider contact information (if available)

Swimming Programs (if included)

If swimming is part of Day Camp, the pool facility must provide written confirmation of:

- Certified lifeguards with current CPR/First Aid credentials
- Camper orientation to pool rules and facilities
- Weather assessments and appropriate supervision
- Proper safety equipment on site and in good repair

Health and Medical Procedures

- A completed **Health History Form** must be on-site for each camper and staff member. Forms are printed and provided to the Local Coordinator prior to camp.
- All prescription medications must be stored in a **locked container** and dispensed only by an authorized adult.
- The congregation must maintain a written agreement with a local physician or registered nurse available by phone for consultation.

Required Policies

- Written parental/guardian permission for camper release to any adult other than a legal guardian.
- Daily verification and documentation of camper absences.
- Implementation of volunteer and staff personnel policies.

Emergency Preparedness

Congregations must develop and implement a written Risk Management and Emergency Plan that includes:

- Identification of potential risks and emergency situations.
- Accident prevention measures and staff/camper education.
- Clear emergency communication procedures.

- Enforced safety rules and protective equipment where appropriate.

Insurance

- Parents' health insurance is **primary**.
- The congregation's liability insurance is **secondary**.
- Mt. Cross insurance is **tertiary**.

Facility Standards

- **Telephone:** A working phone must be available during all program hours.
- **Lavatories:**
 - One toilet per 30 females.
 - One toilet per 50 males.
 - One handwashing station per 30 individuals.
 - Toilets must be accessible at off-site program locations (e.g., parks, field trips).



Planning Committee Checklist

Check	Completed by:	Responsibilities to be Completed
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Site

& Safety

		Confirm and secure an appropriate site for Day Camp.
		Develop written emergency procedures following Mt. Cross guidelines and local regulations.
		Contact local health, fire, and law enforcement agencies to inform them of camp dates and obtain guidance.
		Complete the Emergency Contact Sheet (including 911, fire, police, ambulance, poison control, nearest hospital, and camp leadership).
		Post the Emergency Contact Sheet in all program areas.

Volunteers & Staffing

		Form a local steering committee.
		Select Local Day Camp Coordinator
		Recruit adult volunteers, maintaining at least a 1:8 adult-to-camper ratio (younger campers may require more supervision).
		Recruit youth helpers (must meet age and supervision requirements).
		Provide training for all volunteers and youth helpers in safety, child protection, and program expectations.
		Assign volunteer(s) for daily snacks and drinks.
		Assign volunteer(s) to lead arts and crafts daily.
		Coordinate with the pastor and church staff regarding their roles in the program.
		Schedule and announce the Sunday Planning Meeting ; notify all teachers, staff, and volunteers.

Mt. Cross Staff Support

		Introduce the Local Coordinator to the Mt. Cross Day Camp Director.
		Arrange housing accommodations for male counselors.
		Arrange housing accommodations for female counselors.
		Arrange sack lunches for camp counselors.
		Arrange evening meals for camp counselors. (see below)

Registration & Camper Care

		Use the Mt. Cross online registration system for all campers.
		Ensure each camper has a completed Health History Form and Medical Release Form before participating.
		Provide Mt. Cross with a copy of all completed camper forms.
		Arrange lunches for campers if not provided by families.
		Submit the Final Arrangements Sheet to Mt. Cross at least 2 weeks before Day Camp .
		Establish a clear process for any program fees (collection handled by the local congregation).

Field Trips (if applicable)

		Select safe and age-appropriate field trip sites.
		Identify and invite guest speakers.
		Arrange safe and legally compliant transportation for children.
		Designate a Field Trip Safety Coordinator responsible for supervision and emergency readiness.

Program Resources

		Review bible study curriculum provided by Mt. Cross.
		Review arts and crafts curriculum provided by Mt. Cross.
		Collect all necessary arts and crafts supplies.
		Collect all necessary recreation equipment (including water day).

Publicity & Promotion

		Decide on methods of publicity (church bulletin, flyers, neighboring congregations, schools, press releases, social media).
		Assign publicity tasks to a volunteer.
		Ensure all promotional materials highlight program safety, accessibility, and community involvement.

Local Coordinator Checklist

Host Homes

Family Name	Phone Number
Male Counselors:	
Female Counselors: (if different)	

Host Dinners

Day	Family Name + Address
Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	

Snacks

Day	Daily Theme	Snack
Monday	Kindness	
Tuesday	Humbleness	
Wednesday	Calmness	
Thursday	Steadfastness	
Friday	Forgiveness	

Afternoon Adventure Time

Day	Activity	Transportation Needed?
Wednesday (Hike Day)	Please describe the park or trail you plan on hiking! Or another idea if hiking is not possible.	Y/N
Friday (Interactive Day)	Please describe what the service project is and who it's serving, or what local attraction you plan to visit!	Y/N

Day Camp Pricing Options



Mt. Cross Ministries offers flexible pricing to make Day Camp possible for congregations of every size. Each package includes a team of trained staff who bring the full camp experience—Bible study, music, games, crafts, and team-building—directly to your church.

Pricing Options

1. **\$2,500 — Team of 2-3 counselors, serving up to 20 campers** (\approx \$125 per camper)
2. **\$3,000 — Team of 3 counselors, serving up to 30 campers** (\approx \$100 per camper)
3. **\$3,500 — Team of 3-4 counselors, serving up to 50 campers** (\approx \$87.50 per camper)

Thank you for partnering with Mt. Cross Ministries. Together, we can bring the joy of camp into your congregation and community.