

A Reflection on St. Andrew's Camp Family Week
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A large field of grass, overlooking an enormous lake, surrounded by mountains visible in the distance. This was the scene the staff of St. Andrew's Camp inhabited for nearly two weeks, and the one the families enjoyed for five days.

The pandemic left its mark on virtually every aspect of life this year, and when New York sleepaway camps were prohibited in late June, it was disappointing, but not unexpected news. One could hardly imagine children sharing quarters with all the regulations that have arisen. Yet it was still disheartening. Classroom instruction can, imperfectly, be simulated online, but how can a screen even begin to simulate being in the natural world and hands on activities? You can hardly virtually kayak.

Yet the restrictions to sleepaway camps were not insurmountable. With some creative thinking, which the architects of this year's Family Week camp had in spades, an in-person experience that abided by civil directives was possible. Rather than children sharing a common space, families would be together. Interactions between families involved precautions, but they were possible. Many activities could be done by family units, which prevented outside spread. An in-person Family Week was possible.

On Tuesday, just less than a week before Family Week would begin, the initial staff arrived, and we became acquainted with each other. We worked diligently to prepare the grounds for the families that would be arriving on the ever nearing Monday afternoon. There was much that needed cleaning and unpacking, and we grew acquainted with the roles we would be filling when the program was fully underway. Surfaces needed to be sanitized vigorously. We would be rotating various duties, from kayaking to assisting with games that could be played with social distancing maintained.

In the midst of all this work however, it could be difficult not to become as Martha and become worried by many things. Our days began and concluded with prayer. I have been to summer camps before, but this was the first I had been to that was involved with the Orthodox Faith. The experience was nearly monastic in a way, with prayer and labor every day. We were also graced with Vladyka's presence and guidance, which was invaluable. I felt that I was tangibly drawing nearer to Christ through the spiritual nourishment this camp provided.

The campers arrived, as did more invaluable staff members. Challenges came too. On our first day, rain made many planned activities impossible, but through the creativity of the staff that made Family Week possible this year, new avenues were opened. Quickly we switched to our Rain Plan and a mask-wearing-karaoke event arose which proved to be equally fun activity replacement!

The success of Family Week camp would have been impossible had it not been for the dedication of all the staff. Matushka Tamara's tireless patience and direction enabled four greenhorns without any prior experience of the camp to effectively counsel and arrange

everything. The kitchen staff labored to keep everyone fed with delicious food and to serve it in accordance with established guidelines. Daria, in addition to her work in the office and kitchen, kept a watchful eye on the families and staff to ensure their safety. The clergy labored in the services and spiritual instruction and edification of the families. And all of my fellow counsellors gave it their all to do what needed to be done and make Family Week a success, which it really was.

Things had to change from previous years, but by the Grace of God, we were able to adapt and provide everyone, including the staff, a pause from the turmoil of our current world that allowed us to refocus on our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.