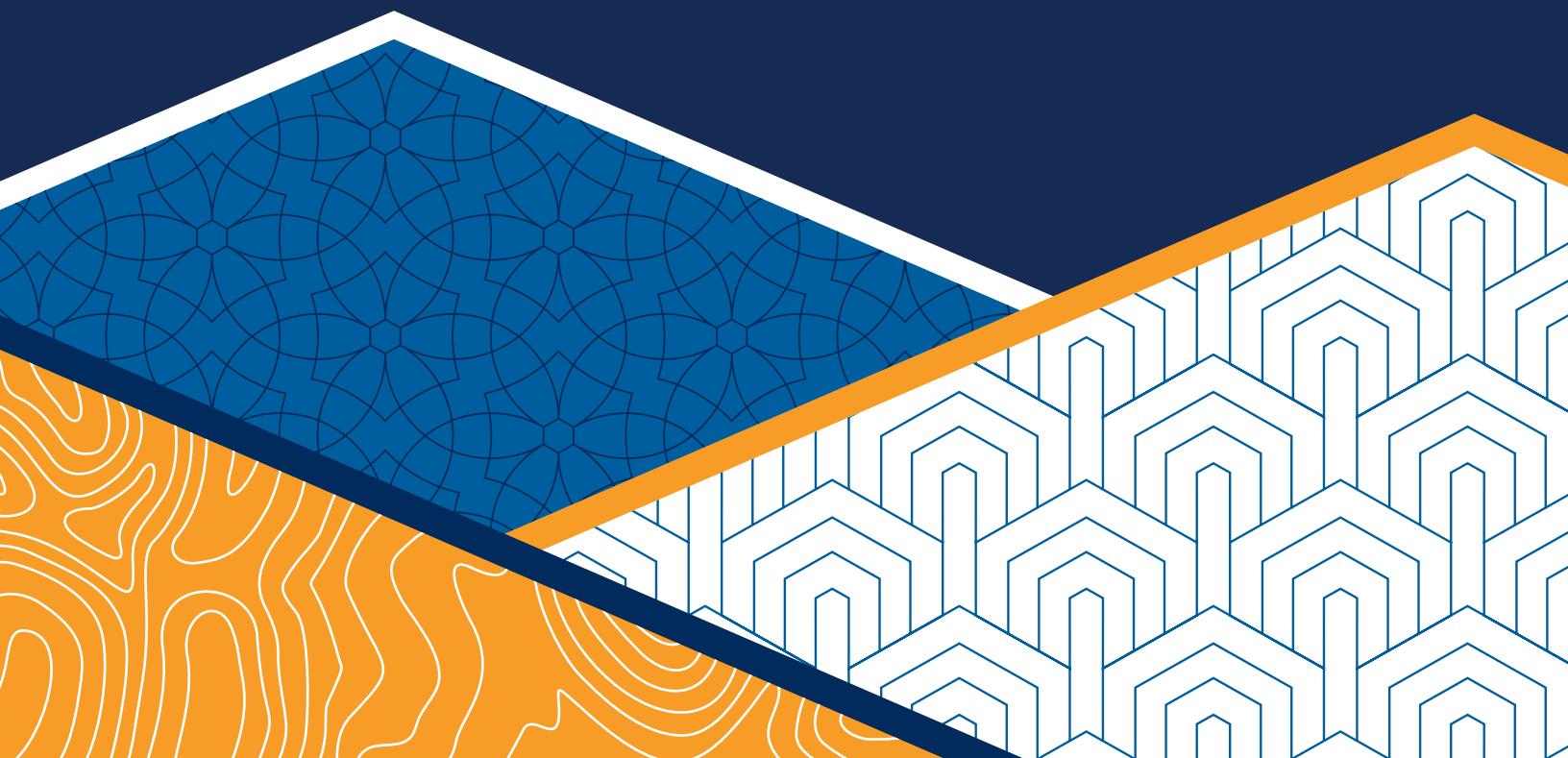




CAMP AS A TEMPORARY COMMUNITY

Have you ever wondered what makes camp, camp? Is it outdoor activities? The bonding that happens over a challenging hike? The late night camp fire chats? All these things are common features of camp, but what makes camp so powerful is less about what happens at camp and more about how camp functions as an experience of temporary community.



TEMPORARY COMMUNITY, DEFINED

Temporary community is any experience in which a person or group of people retreats from the spaces and routines that define normal life and enters a set apart space to engage new routines towards a specific goal, which often relates to growth, rest, renewal, or all three.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

There is evidence throughout Scripture that temporary communities are a tool that God uses to transform and equip His people. He sent the nation of Israel on a 40 year desert hike to prepare them for the promised land. He instituted a yearly feast in which the nation of Israel would remember this experience once they entered the promised land. Jesus retreated to the desert to be tempted. He also retreated often with the disciples before key ministry moments. Human beings are wired to engage cycles of what psychologists call “seeking” and “dwelling”. It is healthy to break routine every once and a while and explore new places, develop new habits, and learn new things.

WHAT TEMPORARY COMMUNITIES MEAN FOR YOU

As a temporary community, Christian summer camps exist alongside permanent communities like home and church and are most effective when they are intentionally linked with our lives outside of the camp environment. Why does this matter? And what does it mean for how we understand camp?



For Camps: Although most camps operate as stand alone ministries, it is important for camp leaders to remember that their camps are part of an ecology of systems that are all working together. Programs should be designed not with the end of camp in mind, but with the permanent community in mind. To that end, it is important to be intentional about partnering with parents and churches so the impact of the experience contributes to life outside camp.



For Parents & Caregivers: Some scholars have described attending summer camp as a “discipline”, much like other spiritual rhythms or disciplines—sending your kids to camp is one the most important things you may do for your child’s faith. When you send your kids to camp, take time to talk with them about how the experience might build on recent growth you’ve seen, and encourage them to be fully present.



For Churches: Christian summer camps provide excellent opportunities for youth in church to develop their own personal faith alongside your hard work the rest of the year. To maximize impact, make intentional connections with camp leaders at the camps your students attend, and make sure to have conversations with kids about what they learned after they return home. If they learned a new skill, such as leading worship, make sure to put that new skill to use in your congregation!

These links are built through intentional transitions into and out of camp, through intentional partnerships with families and churches, and through intentional programs that acknowledge the role of camp as part of a system rather than an isolated, independent, irrelevant to the rest of life experience.



EXPLORE MORE RESOURCES:
wheaton.edu/gftresources