

Camp Roger Camp Scottie

Vision 2025 FAQ

In Fall 2021, Camp Roger's Board of Directors announced Camp Roger's Vision 2025. Vision 2025 was created to challenge, push, and stretch Camp to do our mission better. It is an expansion of our mission, accomplished through increased belonging, diversity, and accessibility. You can read the introduction to this on our website.

In the following FAQ, you'll read more about Vision 2025, including details about our mission and guiding principles, our Faith & Life Covenant, our hiring processes and policies, and our safety policies. These areas are the heartbeat of our ministry, leading us in everything we do at camp.

Our prayer is that by coming alongside each other, we can learn from each other, be thankful for each other, and be committed more than ever to our mission of encountering and celebrating God's love for his children through relationships and experiences in Creation.

What is Vision 2025?

Vision 2025 is an expanded mission through increased belonging, diversity, and accessibility where people feel welcomed, loved, and that they belong; the beautiful racial diversity of God's kingdom is present; accessibility for those with varied abilities is increased; and financial and transportation barriers are minimized.

Mission and Guiding Principles:

1) What is Camp Roger's mission?

Our mission is to encounter and celebrate God's love for his children through relationships and experiences in Creation.

2) How does Camp Roger's mission guide our staff in teaching children about God?

Camp Roger's mission statement is more than just a nice slogan posted on the wall. It guides and directs us in all that we do. Our staff learn it and know it. We discuss it in staff meetings. We live it out every day. We use it to evaluate all our decisions.

Our hearts are focused on God's love for his children. Camp counselors are not left without direction; allowed to teach whatever they feel is important or their own personal beliefs. Our summer counselors are given clear direction and training on how to teach God's word in age-appropriate ways, with age-appropriate topics, and to keep their conversations with campers related to our mission. Likewise, our outdoor education staff teaches from a faith-based world view to both Christian and public schools, allowing God's detailed and beautiful creation to shine, becoming the backdrop to environmental education classes and time spent on our properties while on a field trip.

Even the topic of God's love for His children is still a broad topic. Knowing that we serve families from a wide variety of faith and non-faith backgrounds in every area of our programming, we train and equip our staff to teach kids using only solid Biblical foundational truths that most Christians would agree on.

These truths are the same foundational points outlined in our Faith & Life Covenant:

- 1) We believe that there is one true God who is made known to his creation through the persons of the Trinity: The Father who created us, Jesus Christ the Son who died for us, and the Holy Spirit who guides us.
- 2) We believe that the Bible is the true and inspired Word of God, revealing God's character and redemptive story to his creation.
- 3) We believe that God's world-wide church, which includes all Christians, has been called and equipped to co-labor with Christ in building the kingdom on earth.

3) **Has Camp Roger changed its mission?**

No. We are deeply committed to our mission and convinced that the mission, message, and heart of Camp Roger does not change. While the facilities and staff are different than they were eighty years ago, the heart of a camper's experience is the same. Kids still get dirty, play Capture the Flag, sleep in tents, roast marshmallows over a fire, make friends, splash around in Little Bostwick or Lake Gordon, and maybe don't change their clothes as often as they should. That's the Camp Roger and Camp Scottie experience.

4) **What is Camp Roger's Faith & Life Covenant, who created it, and how is it used?**

Camp Roger's Faith & Life Covenant is a document that provides guidance and direction for how we—as a diverse group of Christians—are called to serve God together at Camp. The Faith & Life Covenant is a recent revision of the original Community Covenant created by the Board of Directors in 2015. It is a separate document from the mission, vision, and core values of camp. The Faith & Life Covenant directs and guides our staff culture and who we are as we work and serve together.

The Camp Roger Board of Directors review the Faith & Life Covenant every year. The most recent revision contained important changes that will help accomplish Vision 2025.

An earlier version of the Covenant had a footnote that indicated Camp's alignment with the beliefs and teachings of the Christian Reformed Church, particularly involving issues around same-sex relationships. This policy had effectively created a "don't ask, don't tell" practice among same sex attracted camp staff. Knowing that Camp Roger serves families from various denominations and beliefs, the Board of Directors acknowledged that Christians have a variety of views, including around same-sex relationships. We committed as a ministry to pursue Christian unity, despite our differences, rather than adopting one particular view or the other,

We understand that different people will have different reactions and perspectives on this. Some have been uncomfortable with the original policy, and others will be uncomfortable with the changes in this one. **We believe strongly that Camp can be a place where diverse followers of Christ can come together to share Christ's love for kids without focusing on or teaching about controversial topics.** Our teaching will continue to be about key foundational truths of our faith. Scripture that is interpreted differently by each denomination should be taught at home or in the church and not at camp. Our amazing staff will continue to be hired for their commitment to Camp's foundational Biblical beliefs, as

well as their individual passion for Christ, their safety and responsibility with others, and their ability to care deeply for the children under their care.

5) How does Camp Roger address controversial topics?

There are many topics on which Christians disagree! You don't have to look far to see disagreement and fighting around topics such as politics, Covid-19, LGBTQ+ opinions, divorce, abortion, and other things.

We believe that divisive topics are not foundational to our salvation, are not essential to our evangelical work and ministry at Camp, and that discussions about these divisive topics (and more) need to happen between a child and a trusted guardian, parent, or pastor. We *affirm*

foundational Biblical truths while at the same time encouraging children to talk to a trusted adult.

Counselors and staff are trained to respond to a child's questions with foundational truths such as: Everyone is created in the image of God and therefore has value; everyone is loved, deserves respect, has kingdom gifts, and God deeply cares for them. We would let campers and students know that Christians believe different things about divorce, same-sex relationships, politics, etc. We would direct campers and students to get guidance from a guardian, parent, or pastor about deeper issues that they wonder about. We strongly believe that Camp should not stand in the place of trusted advisors.

6) Is Camp Roger affiliated with a particular denomination?

No. Camp Roger was founded by the Episcopal Church in 1913 and was purchased by a group of Christian Reformed families in 1941. Since then, Camp Roger has officially been established as a 501C3, an independent and non-denominational ministry. We are not affiliated with any Christian denomination.

It is also important to note that Camp Roger is not a church. Camp Roger is a parachurch organization (meaning a faith-based organization working outside and across denominations) created to help kids learn to love God and appreciate His Creation. We are an evangelical organization by design. Based on that distinction, Camp does not take a stand on every issue or topic as a church would, because in doing so, it would dilute or divert us from our core mission.

Hiring Processes and Policies:

1.) How do you know that summer counselors and staff are living out the Christian life?

Camp has multiple steps that direct us through each year's hiring process, and we are confident that it continually brings us amazing and safe leaders. In every step of the hiring process, Camp wants to see and hear from an applicant that their relationship with God is vibrant, healthy, and active. We want counselors and staff who are growing in their faith and have values that match our own. Each applicant is required to sign and agree to our Faith & Life Covenant which states that they agree with and affirm the document, agreeing to strive to live out this Covenant with God's help.

References in this process are critical. We require the applicants to provide three references from people who know them spiritually and can speak to how the applicant lives out their faith.

For summer staff hiring, our two campus directors participate in the initial interviews together, asking questions that revolve around the applicant's faith journey—past and present—and what it

would mean for them to be called to teach children about God at camp. We use both scenarios and direct question such as “If a 10-year-old is in your cabin and it seems as if they might not know what it means to have a relationship with God, how would you describe that to them?” Or “Who is Jesus Christ in your life and why do you want to share that with children this summer?” Every applicant is also asked for a verbal response to the Faith & Life Covenant and asked what it means to them that they agreed to sign it. Conversations continue about the applicant’s spiritual life, until our directors have a clear vision on the applicant.

Second-round interviews are conducted as an all-day group interview with final applicants, and leadership staff members interacting with applicants throughout the day. Our directors look for different qualities in applicants including: SIBKIS (the ability to See It Big, Keep it Simple), Spirituality, Staff Relationships, Responsibility, Child Management, Growth Mindset, and Self-Awareness. The day is filled with challenges and conversations meant to distinguish applicants above others. A lot of prayer is put into the process right from the beginning. We give these big decisions up to God and ask for all the guidance and clarity from Him!

Once a counselor begins to work at camp for the summer, overnight camp and day camp head counselors check in daily with their individual counselors to see how they are doing with maintaining mental and spiritual health. Each Head Counselor reports responses to our leadership team during daily meetings. If a counselor is feeling drained or spiritually dry, we work hard as a team to support them however we can in order for that counselor to continue to pour love into their campers. Our leadership teams also meet two times throughout the summer with each counselor for them to provide verbal and written feedback on how they are doing. These check-ins include questions about their spiritual health and how they are staying engaged in their own personal God time, cabin devotions, and their connection to the community.

2) Do you hire same sex attracted counselors?

When hiring a counselor, summer staff, outdoor education staff member, or year-round staff member, Camp Roger focuses on an individual’s child management skills, spiritual leadership, fun attitude, ability to SIBKIS, peer relationship skills, responsibility/maturity, and their willingness to abide by the Faith & Life Covenant. Sexual attraction is not one of our criteria and is not a factor in our hiring decisions.

Safe Camp Policies:

1) What do you have in place to keep campers safe?

Camp Roger and Camp Scottie place a top priority on camper safety. For each of our campuses, we focus on three main areas: screenings for employees and volunteers, certification requirements, and procedures and policies.

We believe that detailed screening standards are vital in preventing abuse of children. Our policies and hiring practices intentionally exceed national safety standards and include key elements such as State criminal background check, National Sex Offender background check, and a Voluntary Disclosure Statement. Additionally, all summer counselors attend an intense two-week training before camp begins focusing on the details of their role at Camp, as well as safety and emergency procedures, child abuse detection and prevention, mandated reporting, mental health education, and more.

Camp Roger requires all staff members and volunteers that could have interactions with children to complete Ministry Safe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training before participating in our programs.

We are committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Harassment of any kind is not allowed. In addition to careful hiring, screening, and licensing practices, Camp Roger has designed its facilities and programs to keep kids safe as well. Camp has created a culture where staff are never in a one-on-one situation with campers (2-1 rule) and interactions are positive and safe. Facilities are designed so that campers have privacy when changing and at bedtime. Counselors supervise campers within view of other counselors and under the watchful eye of a head counselor. Systems are in place to protect campers and uphold a culture of safety.

Our campuses are inspected and licensed by the State of Michigan, and we are an accredited member of the Christian Camp and Conference Association.

Read our Safe Camp Policy page on CampRoger.org to learn more.

Please note: Doug Vanderwell, Camp Roger's executive director, is more than willing to have conversations surrounding Vision 2025. Email him at doug@camproger.org to arrange a time to talk.