



ANGEL TREE CAMPING® AN OVERVIEW

Camping is a ministry opportunity that helps your church stay connected with the Angel Tree® families you served at Christmas. Children get a week away from home that challenges them and exposes them to the message of Christ's love. The caregiver gets a week of rest and perhaps a chance to catch up on other responsibilities. And the incarcerated parent may be deeply moved to know that his or her child was cared for in this special way. Prison Fellowship will help support your church's ministry by providing materials and resources to help you create a wonderful summertime Christian camp experience.



Steps to Success

Below are some suggested steps you can take to help ensure that your camping ministry is the best it can be:

- **Gather Your Team**

A successful camping experience will be made possible by the prayer and effort of a dedicated volunteer team. Work with your church leadership to form a team of people who are excited about helping extend your church's Angel Tree ministry in this way. You may want to make public and written announcements inviting people to get involved with the program. The tasks for volunteers can include contacting caregivers, leading the prayer team, hosting an information open house at the church for the families, providing transportation, purchasing camp supplies, or filling a tote bag with supplies—whatever your individual camping program requires.

- **Reserve a Camp**

If your church already has a relationship with a camp, consider including Angel Tree children with your other campers. Angel Tree also has established relationships with many Christian camps across the country. To find one near you, call 1-800-55-ANGEL. If you need additional help finding a Christian camp in your area, you can contact the Christian Camp & Conference Association (CCCA) by visiting their website at www.ccca.org or going directly to their online camp directory at www.findachristiancamp.com. It is best to contact camps early, because spaces fill up quickly. As you are trying to determine which camp to choose, you will want to consider things such as:

- How far is the camp from your church, and what will the transportation arrangements be?
- What is the per-camper cost, and who will be responsible for covering those costs? Will the camp offer full or partial scholarships for Angel Tree children? Limited scholarship funds are available from Angel Tree to help defray the cost of camp. Call **1.800.55.ANGEL** for more information.
- Will the camp provide your church with brochures, videos, etc., that can be shared with the Angel Tree caregivers to help them understand the type of experience their children will have and help them feel more secure about the camping opportunity?
- Will the camp ask for volunteers from the church to attend?





- **Contact the Caregivers**

This can be the most challenging part of the process, so we encourage you to start reaching out to your Angel Tree families about the camping opportunity as soon as possible. Use the caregiver postcards provided by Prison Fellowship as a simple and effective way for your church to reach out to the families and let them respond with their interest. You may also try connecting with the caregivers by phone, by having a Camping Information Open House at your church, or by making a personal visit to the family if appropriate. No matter how you reach out, it's important to be sensitive to any fear or hesitation the caregiver may have. Remember, the purpose of camping is to strengthen the relationship between your church and the Angel Tree family, so you'll want to lay the groundwork of trust.

- **Finalize the Details**

After you have confirmed which children will be attending camp, you can call Angel Tree at 1.800.55.ANGEL to place an order for tote bags and Bibles for each camper. Once your church receives these materials, we encourage you to have members of your congregation fill the tote bags with some basic camp necessities (check with the camp to see if it provides a list of items each child should bring). Each child should fill out a registration form (this is usually provided by the camp) and any other paperwork that the camp or your church requires, including medical forms. As the camp date approaches, you will want to make sure that all the details are finalized and that the caregivers are aware of the list of items each child needs to bring, transportation arrangements, drop-off and pick-up times and locations, contact information if they need to get in touch with their child while at camp, etc. Making sure that everything is in place and that the communication lines are open will help ensure a smooth and comfortable camping experience for everyone involved.

- **Follow Up After Camp**

It is important to connect with the Angel Tree families after camp is over. You may want to consider having a post-camp event, where the children and caregivers are invited to come together to celebrate a great week at camp and share their experiences with one another, or with the church congregation as a whole. Another great way to extend the connection with your Angel Tree families after camp is to start a Letter-Writing Club, where the children can get together and write letters to their incarcerated parents. If you are interested in this opportunity, please call **1.800.55.ANGEL** to learn more about how Prison Fellowship can help support you.

Camping is a great way to get involved on a more regular basis in the lives of your Angel Tree families. We hope your camp experience will encourage you to consider the additional ministry opportunities to this special group of people throughout the year. For more ways your church can continue to build solid, lasting relationships, visit our website at www.angeltree.org.

Thank you for taking this role. You are bringing the love of God to children and families of the incarcerated. Because of you, a child may find renewed hope this summer.