

Camp St. Joseph of Damascus
Camper/Parent Handbook
Updated February 16, 2026



CAMP ST. JOSEPH OF DAMASCUS

Dates to Remember

Requests for financial assistance	Due by March 31
Full payment due	Due by April 30
FARE Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan Form and Other Specialty Medical Forms (if applicable)	Due by April 30

Email: office@campstjoseph.org
Website: www.campstjoseph.org

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CAMP ST. JOSEPH OF DAMASCUS

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Christ is in our midst!

We are very excited that you have registered your child(ren) for camp at Camp St. Joseph. You are in good company. According to the American Camp Association, millions of kids attend camp each year, and more than 2,900 young people attend camps throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese each summer alone. We appreciate the fact that you are ready to entrust those who mean the world to you into our care. We work hard to never take that trust for granted and feel privileged to be able to partner with you in the spiritual growth of your child(ren).

The following pages contain information vital to your ability to properly prepare your child(ren) and your family for camp this summer at Camp St. Joseph. The safety and well-being of your child(ren) is our top priority. To that end, **we ask and expect that you will read each section carefully** so that you can properly prepare your camper(s) for their Camp St. Joseph experience, and we can be properly prepared to receive and care for them. This is important as we constantly strive to improve our work. Please note that this booklet includes some information which has been changed from previous years.

We look forward to seeing your child(ren) at camp this summer at Camp St. Joseph!

Your servant in Christ,

William Ozone
Camp Director
Camp St. Joseph of Damascus

Camp St. Joseph Mission Statement

Camp St. Joseph transforms lives and nurtures faith in Jesus Christ through Orthodox Christian community living, worship, education, fellowship, and love.

Preparing Your Camper(s) for Camp Life

The camp experience is like other important experiences in life: the better you are prepared, the more you get out of the experience. This section covers all of the key areas that require attention before your camper leaves home. One of the first things to do, especially with new campers (but returning campers need reminders, too!) is to talk with your camper(s) about what they can expect. Below are a few things you should review with your camper(s) to help ease their transition to camp life.

A Typical Day at Camp

Each session is filled with activities that allow young people to experience a holistic Orthodox Christian lifestyle. Campers experience an average day with cabin wake-up at 7 AM, Orthros (or other morning church services), followed by breakfast where, as at all meals, we begin and end with community prayer. Songs and playful chants are often heard at mealtimes that help create an atmosphere of love and fellowship. Divided by cabins, the morning program consists of two one-hour sessions, filled with Christian Education classes and other activities such as lives of the Saints, major feast days, or chanting.

Lunch is attended by all staff and campers to refuel for an afternoon of sports, activities, and fun. All campers attend two one-hour afternoon periods where they will rotate between activities such as swimming, soccer, volleyball, basketball, just to name a few. The campers get an afternoon snack (included in camper tuition) to sustain them before evening service and dinner.

Cabin time offers rest and quiet or social time within the cabin before an evening service (Paraklesis or Vepsers) and Dinner. Each evening, the campers come together for a camp-wide Evening Program which changes each night.

Following evening program, cabin time allows for unwinding and addressing unanswered questions for individual cabins. Contemporary moral issues may be addressed in older cabins by a session priest or another speaker while younger cabins are getting needed rest.

Camp Life

Nearly everything about life at camp is different from life at home. Preparing your camper with as much information as possible will be helpful to their adjustment. While giving them a positive preview of their coming experience, let them know that life will be different, and you want them to gain many new experiences. Some areas to prepare them for include the following:

Living Arrangements

Campers will live with 8 to 9 fellow campers and two counselors in a shared cabin with a private bathroom. All cabins will have private showers. Campers are grouped according to age and

gender. **We do not accept roommate requests.** One of the best aspects of the camp experience is learning to adjust to group living, making new friends, and getting along as part of a team.

Meals

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are eaten together as a cabin. Many items will be to your child's liking, some items may be things your child may have never tried before. We are not able to handle special requests for meals. Please help your camper by relaying your expectation that they will try new foods and eat what is served. If for medical reasons there are dietary restrictions or food allergies for your camper, please note this in your child's registration so that the Camp Nurse and Kitchen Staff may properly prepare for your camper's arrival.

For a camper with food allergies, the FARE Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan must be completed and signed by both parent/guardian and physician and submitted along with all required healthcare information forms by April 30. This form may be found at <http://www.campstjoseph.org/about/forms/>. To help offset the additional cost for this meal planning, all special dietary requests may include supplemental fees depending on the dietary restriction.

Fasting

As an Orthodox Christian camp, we adhere to the tenets of the Orthodox Christian Faith, and therefore, on prescribed days we follow the fasts of the Church in a very simple and humble attempt. Our fasting practice here at Camp St. Joseph is to refrain from meat on fasting days. Because we are a rental group, we are also subject to the limitations of the dining service that the facility provides. While we recognize that families follow different fasting practices, here at Camp St. Joseph we feel this is a reasonable expectation of all campers and staff to aid us in our spiritual growth. We encourage you as parents to speak with your children about fasting so it is not a surprise while at camp.

Camp Activities

Life at camp takes full advantage of our outdoor setting. Activities include field sports, Challenge Ropes Course, and swimming. Rainy days are a frequent occurrence, so rain gear is a must, though the facility does have an indoor gymnasium to keep us active on rainy days.

Conduct

All campers are expected to act in ways appropriate to an Orthodox Christian setting. While all disciplinary action will be taken to attempt resolution on site, the Camp Director reserves the right to dismiss campers for gross violations of camp rules. Parents will be responsible for arranging and covering costs for their child's early departure.

Independence

One of the major parts of the camper's experience is being independent from parents with typically no contact during the camping session. This can be one of the most positive experiences they can have at camp and one which can be invaluable in the process of growing up. Be aware that as a parent, you may need to prepare for this as much—if not more—than your camper!

Arrangements to Make Before Camp

Fees

Balance of all payments is due by April 30, or the camper's spot may be offered to those on the waitlist. Special payment arrangements can be made by emailing office@campstjoseph.org and are subject to approval by the Camp Director. Such requests must be received prior to the April 30 deadline. All balances will be billed to the camper's parents, regardless of any parish subsidies, so parents are encouraged to ensure that all parish subsidies are paid before the April 30 deadline to avoid losing their camper's spot in the session.

Financial Assistance Information

Camp St. Joseph is committed to ensuring a young person is not denied the opportunity to attend camp due to financial concerns. Those campers that are in need of financial assistance should speak to their parish priest to see if the parish can assist in anyway.

Additional funds are also available from the Diocese Council for families needing financial assistance. To request financial assistance, please fill out the online "Financial Assistance Request Form" on our website: campstjoseph/about/forms, no later than March 31. Notification of awards will be sent sometime in April. All financial assistance requests are confidential and awards are only given on the basis of financial need.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

We appreciate prompt notification in the event of cancellation. Cancellations by April 30th will receive a full refund less the deposit. After April 30th, refunds of tuition payments may be requested in writing and will only be granted if a replacement for the open spot is found, except in cases of family emergency (not family choice) and at the discretion of the Camp Director. The deposit is non-refundable and non-transferable; exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Camp Director.

Healthcare

Your camper's health and safety are our #1 priority. All healthcare information including completion of the online health information and, if applicable, the completed and parent/guardian and physician signed FARE Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan form and/or other Specialty Medical Forms are due April 30. If you are unable to meet the April 30 deadline, please contact the camp office in advance at office@campstjoseph.org to request an extension.

The Health History & Information for your camper may be submitted online by logging into your UltraCamp Account and clicking on the link to the Health History under your camper's name. Our Camp Nurse reviews all medical forms in advance. If your child has any medical issues or conditions requiring special accommodation at camp, please contact the Camp Office as soon as possible. Please do not allow embarrassment to prevent us from providing adequate care for your child in your absence. The form is confidential, and the information is only available to the Camp Director and the Health Staff.

A Medical Staff is in residence during the camping season to take care of any basic health care needs. Upon your camper's arrival, he/she will meet with the Camp Nurse to review any medical concerns. All prescription medication will be collected upon arrival at camp, so please pack them in an accessible location. **Prescription medication must be brought in the original prescription container with the original pharmacy label.** Please do not send OTC medications with your camper, as we stock them in our Health Center (Tylenol, Advil, cold medicine, etc.)

We do not have the ability to provide 1:1 health care for campers except for brief periods of time, nor do we have the ability to provide overnight care in the health center for multiple nights of camp. If there is a situation where a camper's chronic health condition is flaring up at camp in a way that necessitates frequent interventions, or if a child gets acutely ill in a way that requires more frequent monitoring than we can safely provide, parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up that child from camp early.

Health Insurance

All campers should be covered by their family policy. While Camp St. Joseph will act as guarantor, any costs incurred by the Camp in providing required treatment for doctor's appointments, prescriptions, etc., will be billed to the camper's parents or guardian.

Mental Health

At Camp St. Joseph we take mental health seriously and we do our best to ensure all campers are mentally healthy and receive the help they need. As required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, all staff members are considered "mandated reporters", which means we are required by law to report suspected child abuse. This means if we have any reason to suspect that a child (under the age of 18) is being abused – physically, sexually, emotionally, or psychologically – we are required by law to report it.

Please know that our goal at Camp St. Joseph is the safety and well-being of our campers, staff, and volunteers. If we determine that an individual is a risk to him/herself or others, we may contact the individual's parents/guardians and ask them to pick the individual up as soon as possible. This is especially the case if we suspect an individual wishes to hurt him/herself or someone else.

Our staff participate in training on the topic of mental health, and will abide by the Youth Protection Policy of the Antiochian Archdiocese. They are given information about several mental health disorders we often see at camp, common behaviors that are manifested in those disorders, and effective strategies for responding to those behaviors. If you have any additional questions regarding our mental health procedures, please feel free to contact our office.

Photos/Videos

Photos will be taken daily and posted online and linked from our website campstjoseph.org. This keeps parents and friends back home informed of the daily activities at camp. Only participants' first names (not last names) will be used on the website.

Throughout your child's stay at Camp St. Joseph, staff members will be videotaping footage which will be included in a Camp Video. This video will be primarily for the participants as a memento of their experience. However, video footage will also be used for purposes of promoting Camp St. Joseph and its programs. The video is included in the cost of tuition and the link will be sent out after departure day. Please know that we do our best to have each camper videotaped and photographed, but do not expect to see your camper on our website daily.

Media Consent

Parents must agree to Media Consent in the registration process granting permission for their child's photo and video to be taken for photos, videos and promotional materials for the camp. This is laid out online in your Camp St. Joseph account during the registration process.

Sending a First-Time Camper

If this is your child's first trip to Camp St. Joseph (or any overnight camp), your preparation in advance will go a long way toward helping them have a great experience and minimize the effects of homesickness. Former AV Camp Director Fr. Michael Nasser wrote an article entitled "Preventing Homesickness" which may be downloaded from our website in the forms section. We hope you will read the article and use the suggestions given to best prepare you and your child for their stay away from home.

Packing Guidelines for Camp

Enjoying everything camp has to offer begins with packing the proper attire. Our program contains a variety of experiences, and we want you to be ready for them all!

1. We will often be sitting on the floor, walking long distances, and participating in athletic activities.
2. Camp is meant for running, jumping, climbing, etc., so be sure your clothing fits those activities.
3. While camping is of its nature informal, Christian modesty should be your guiding principle when packing.
4. Excessively revealing clothing or sexually suggestive clothing should not be packed as inappropriate clothing will not be permitted to be worn.
5. Shoulders should be covered during all church services.

Packing List

All clothing and items brought to camp should be labeled with the camper's name.

Clothing:

- Underwear
- Socks – pack extra!
- Shorts (Spandex/biker shorts are not allowed)
- Pants (required for church services)
- Shirts (Crop tops and spaghetti strap tanks are not allowed)
- Two nicer outfits for Divine Liturgy
 - Guys: polo shirt, or button down. Tie optional
 - Gals: Dress, skirt, or dress pants with a blouse
- Sweatshirts – *mornings and evenings can be chilly*
- Raincoat
- Shoes/Sneakers (no open toe sandals, sneakers required for sports activities)
- Heels are not safe on camp terrain and should not be packed and worn at camp.

Bathroom

- Bath Towel & wash cloth
- Shampoo & Soap

- Personal Toiletries (Hairbrush/comb, toothbrush & toothpaste, deodorant, etc)
- Feminine products
- Shower Shoes - Flip Flops are allowed for the shower only

Pool/Waterfront

- Swimsuit
 - Guys: rash/sun guard shirts are encouraged
 - Gals: No bikinis, or overly revealing swimsuits
- Pool Towel
- Optional: Goggles (masks that cover the nose are not allowed) and water shoes

Piercings/Tattoos

- Reminder, we are very active during camp: studs may be more practical than dangly earrings
 - Body and facial piercings are not permissible
 - Earrings on guys are not permissible
 - Tattoos should remain covered while at camp

Medications

- REMINDER: All medications (prescription and OTC) must be in their original container and given to the Medical Staff at check-in. No medicine can be kept in the cabin.

Leave at Home (any of these items will be confiscated upon arrival to camp)

- Food
- Electronics (cell phones, i-pods, electronic games, i-pads/tablets, etc.)
- All alcohol and tobacco products (including Juuls, e-cigs, dab pens, vapes, etc.)
- Dangerous implements (knives, axes, fireworks, etc.)
- Any illegal substances (campers found with any will be sent home immediately)
- Jewelry and other valuables
- Overly revealing/sexually suggestive apparel
- Clothing with inappropriate writing
- High heels
- Open-toed shoes (besides shower shoes)
- Expensive or name-brand clothing
- Pets
- Any aerosol products (hairspray, deodorant, insect repellent, etc.)
- Money

Please check local weather forecasts close to camp, as it may get cold at night.

Cabin storage space is limited, so each camper should bring no more than two pieces of luggage: one suitcase/duffle bag and one carry-on size, either a small bag or backpack.

Snacks and Care Packages

No snacks need to be sent with the campers or mailed to camp as each camper receives a snack and drink every day from our Gimme Shop, and dessert at meals. The cost of these snacks is included in the camper fee.

Care packages are not allowed at camp due to the short length of the session. If your camper forgot something essential, please contact our office and let us know.

Bedding

- Pillow and pillowcase, sleeping bag and/or twin sheets, and a blanket

Optional

- Sunscreen (aerosols are not allowed)
- Bug spray – non-aerosol, 10% max DEET for children 12 and under, 30% max for 13 and up
- Reusable water bottle – please label with your camper’s name!
- Flashlight
- Bible, books, camera (marked with name), journal, travel games (non-electronic)

Laundry

There are no laundry facilities at camp. Please bring enough clothes for the duration of camp.

Spending Money

The camper fee covers all regular camping expenses. There is no need for campers to have money at camp.

Lost/Stolen Items

Each article of clothing and all gear must be clearly labeled for identification. Please write name or initials on all clothing and belongings; remind your camper to be responsible at camp to keep track of their things at all times, including sweatshirts, water bottles, crafts, pool towels, etc.

Camp St. Joseph is not responsible for lost or stolen items. All personal belongings are the responsibility of the owner. All unclaimed items will be donated to a local charity or thrown away.

During the Camping Session

Visitation Policy

Please feel free to meet our staff and tour the camp facilities on arrival day. However, because campers often become homesick when they see a parent or family member (even parents of other campers), we ask that there be no other visitors to camp during the regular camping session.

Contact with your Child

The active camp schedule prevents regular contact with your camper. Outgoing calls may be allowed only at the discretion of the Camp Director, and only for emergency situations. Receiving or placing phone calls during the session disrupts the program and often makes homesickness worse, so we do not allow them except for emergency circumstances. Therefore, you will probably not hear from the camp or your camper during the session, and remember, “no news is good news!” If your camper suffers serious injury or illness, you will be promptly notified. This includes any issue requiring off-camp health services or an illness in which a fever lasts for more than 24 hours, or evidence that your child has been exposed to a communicable disease.

We know it can be hard not knowing what your child is doing during their stay. To give you a non-invasive “peek” in on them, parents and others are invited to check the camp website for daily picture updates during the camping session.

Should an emergency requiring communication with your child arise, please contact the Camp Director William Ozone at 774-284-3903. If it is after hours, the voicemail system will offer you an emergency number to dial.

After Camp Resources

We have put together After Camp Resources for campers, parents/guardians, parish clergy, youth workers, and anybody in a camper's life to help process the experience at camp. These resources include suggestions for how to talk with each other to best process and reflect upon the camp experience. Please visit our website at campstjoseph.org for links to these resources.

Getting Your Camper to and from Camp

Arrival Day

Camp begins on **Monday**, August 10, and check-in registration is between 10AM and 11AM Noon. Lunch will be served on the first day of camp for all campers registered for camp. Unfortunately, we cannot provide lunch for parents or other family members. Arrivals at any other time must be approved in advance by the Camp Director.

The check-in process will include being introduced to your camper's counselor, meeting the nurse to discuss any health issues and/or turning over all medications which will be dispensed from the Health Center, and collecting all cash to prevent loss during the session.

Departure Day

Camp ends on **Sunday** morning and all campers must be picked up between 11 AM and 12 PM Noon. Given that Camp St. Joseph ends on a Sunday, campers will conclude the camp with Divine Liturgy. Parents who wish to pick up their child and still attend Divine Liturgy are welcome to join us in the morning for our camp service.

Driving Directions

Camp St. Joseph is held at Camp Mah-Kee-Nac, a beautiful camp accredited by the American Camp Association, located at 6 Hawthorne Rd, Lenox MA 01240.

Campers Driving to Camp

If a camper is driving to camp, they must turn in their keys to the camp office upon arrival to Camp St. Joseph.

Camper Policy for Online Social Networking and Blogging Websites

In general, Camp St. Joseph views social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.), personal Web sites, and Weblogs positively and respects the right of campers to use them as a medium of self-expression. If a camper chooses to identify himself or herself as a camper at Camp St. Joseph on such internet venues, some readers of such websites or blogs may view the camper as a representative or spokesperson of Camp St. Joseph. In light of this possibility, Camp Saint Joseph requires, as a condition of participation in the camp, that campers observe the following guidelines when referring to Camp St. Joseph, its programs or activities, its campers, and/or other staff, in a blog or on a website:

- 1) Campers must be respectful in all communications (text and photos) and blogs related to or referencing the camp, its employees, and other campers. Any photos or messages that are linked or “tagged” from “friends” and attached to your site(s) or profile(s) that are inappropriate should also be removed.
- 2) Campers must not use obscenities, profanity, or vulgar language.
- 3) Campers must not use blogs or personal websites to disparage Camp St. Joseph, other campers, or staff of Camp St. Joseph.
- 4) Campers must not use blogs or personal websites to harass, bully, or intimidate other campers or staff of Camp St. Joseph. Behaviors that constitute harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, color, or disability; sexually suggestive, humiliating, or demeaning comments; and threats to stalk, haze, or physically injure another person.
- 5) Campers must not use these venues to discuss engaging in conduct prohibited by camp policies and an Orthodox Christian lifestyle, including, but not limited to, the use of alcohol and drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, and bullying.

Any camper found to be in violation of any portion of this policy will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal at the discretion of the Camp Director.