



Welcome to the Christikon Life in trails (backpacking) programs

Information for Youth Campers, their Parents/Guardians, and Adult Advisors

We want to help campers prepare for the time at Christikon so it will be a rich and fulfilling time. Both campers and their parents/guardians should read through these materials, so they can begin developing a sense of what's involved in becoming a part of the Christikon life and be better prepared for participation.

It is the mission of Christikon to
**to awaken and nurture faith in Christ —
exploring God's creation
and the adventure of life together.**

In carrying out Christikon's mission, we seek to:

Embody the gospel of Jesus Christ. Grounded in a Lutheran articulation of the gospel, we strive to share the grace of God with all, hoping for it to shape everything we do.

Grow as the Body of Christ. We move towards a deeper experience and awareness of Christian community, centered in worship, where all are sustained in the covenant of baptism and drawn more deeply into the lives of each other.

Form faithful Christians. We will force no one into the faith. But we want people to recognize and grow from the foundation offered in the gifts and insights of those who have gone before us, so we might more clearly discern what God is doing in our lives and in our life together in this world. We explore the biblical story together, listening for God's Word to us. We try to model Christian character as we face this world's hungers and hopes. We seek out fitting shapes for faith's witness in the world.

Raise up stewards of the whole creation. We use our majestic mountain setting to encourage a greater appreciation of the natural environment, to develop a deeper sense of gratitude and responsibility for the whole creation of God.

Grow leaders. We seek to strengthen the work and witness particularly of those who serve as our staff members, offering training and experience for leadership on behalf of the church.

Be a faithful partner in ministry with our congregations. We try to maintain the connection between life at camp and life back home. We offer our mountain facilities for congregational retreats. We seek to implement programs appropriate to our congregations' changing needs in ministry.

Check our website for information on goals and objectives for camper development: www.christikon.org

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Camp address: 4661 Boulder Road • McLeod, MT 59052-8839 • 406 932-6300

Christikon is an American Camp Association Accredited Camp

Backpacking is Hard Work

We want you and everyone else to participate in the Christikon life in some of the world's loveliest country, and to find it a valuable experience in which to participate.

There **will** be challenges. At the start, you will likely develop sore muscles; you might find your first day or two at higher altitudes contributing to tiredness and even a headache. However, most people do not find this to be a problem. You can expect to do a fair amount of hiking (up to 5-8 hours some days), and you will be carrying between 1/4 and 1/3 of your body weight in your backpack.

Junior high Wayfarers and CreationCare participants hike with packs on usually only the first and last days. Senior high Mountaineers backpackers typically cover more terrain and have routes that include a lay-over day.

How do I prepare?

You can prepare mentally by praying, planning to share yourself with others, and committing yourself not only to your own needs, but to the needs of others.

Prepare for physical activity. Brisk walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming, or other activities that increase your heart rate for a sustained period, are best for preparing you. If you have not been too active recently, start slowly and increase the time you spend on these activities. Try to work up to exercising for at least thirty minutes a day, three or more times a week. Make sure your hiking boots are broken in to avoid blisters on the trail. All will help you be better prepared for hiking in the mountains.

Arriving at Camp

When you arrive at Christikon, you will spend the first night at camp, with an orientation to life in the wilderness. You will learn how to set up and take care of your tent and be briefed on safety and low-impact camping practices (water treatment, group hiking, camping in bear country, latrine procedures, health care, etc.). Your group will leave the next morning after completing your pack-out.

Health Screening and Medications Management. You will go through a brief health screening, where one of our staff (under the direction of our Health Care Manager) will go over your Health Form and discuss any special needs you may have. You will need to turn in any medications you bring with you at this time. Following the accreditation standards of the American Camp Association, Christikon must have all medications (including over-the-counter medications you bring) under the control of the Camp Health Manager (or the appropriate counselor when persons are away from camp). Special arrangements are made during health screening with campers who must always carry certain medications with them (e.g. asthma inhalers).

Life in the Wilderness

What is in store for you? While out on the trail, you will be getting to know yourself better, reflecting on your abilities, your goals, and your calling. You will be part of a community where everyone matters. You will become involved more deeply in caring for the Creation by developing a sense of life with minimum impact, and by sharing in trails work and rehabilitation projects.

The life of faith. We also hope that camp will help you grow in your faith. You do not have to be a Lutheran to be at Christikon—you do not even have to be a believer, however, faith shapes our life together at Christikon. We **worship** together at the beginning and end of every day. We take time each day to study the **Bible** together. We usually have daily **Quiet Time**, so each of us can have a brief chance to be alone with God. And there are all kinds of unscheduled times where we find ourselves both challenged and deepened.

Food and meal times. Sharing together in the common life during meals is a significant part of the Christikon life. On the trail you will be sharing "family style" in meals that you and others prepare for the whole group. We try to serve tasty and nutritious meals, even though we try to live within budgets and use ingredients that do not weigh too much or take up too much space. There are some limitations on what we can have for meals, but we hope you'll find the food good for you, and that you'll participate as graciously as you can in the meals offered. **If you have special dietary needs**, please let us know on your health form. We will make every effort to accommodate dietary needs, however, we may encourage you to bring your own backpack meals and snacks that fit your needs.

The CreationCare program: backpacking and service

CreationCare participants will be spending **up to eight hours of work days** doing trails work and/or site rehabilitation, as arranged with and supervised by personnel of the U.S. Forest Service. Like other trails groups, your first night and last nights will be at the main camp. Your first and last days out on the trail will include travel to the site of your work project. There will likely be one day for hiking and/or getting up into the area high country.

Christikon and the Forest Service will be providing you with cotton work gloves, hard hats (when required), and the necessary tools (and instruction in how to use them safely). For some of the work you do, you will want to have long pants and long sleeves for added protection. **Leather work gloves** are also good to bring for protecting your hands.

It is hard to know in advance what the weather will be like. But it's possible you may be working under wet and/or muddy conditions. Try to pack an extra set of work clothes if you can.

Other Information and Christikon Policies

Campers' Vehicles. Any vehicles campers bring to camp must be parked and locked in the Parking Area and not used during the camp session.

Communication while on the trail. Generally, there is not much contact between camp and trails groups. In the event of an emergency, we can communicate with groups via Garmin GPS devices each group carries with them.

When Christikon Will Notify Parents/Guardians. Whenever there is an injury or illness that necessitates a backcountry evacuation, or when a camper has an illness or displays conduct or behavior that seriously interferes with camp life, Christikon will notify parents/guardians by phone.

Mail service is provided to the camp twice a week. Those who send letters to campers should consider both transit times and delivery days. Trails campers will be able to receive mail only on the first and last days of a session. Because of our location, Christikon has only one **telephone** line. We ask that parents seek to contact campers only for emergency messages. Campers may not use the Christikon telephone, except for urgent reasons. Cell phones do not work at Christikon. Email access is not available to youth campers.

Cell Phone Usage. Though there is no cell reception at Christikon and internet access is not available to campers, we are mindful that most cell phones serve a purpose as a camera, alarm clock, and other benefits. We ask that all campers exhibit appropriate usage of their phones, and not utilize headphones during the day's activities.

No Swimming. The river, lakes, and streams in Christikon's area are very cold and swift-moving, and we do not have waterfront supervisory staff, so swimming is not permitted in the Christikon program.

Fishing. If you fish, you must do so according to the laws of Montana. Montanans under age 12, or non-residents under age 15, may fish on an adult's license when accompanied by the license-holder. Fishing licenses are required for anyone age 15 and above, or non-resident youth under 15 who wish to fish independently of a licensed adult. You may get them online before you come to camp at <https://ols.fwp.mt.gov/> or make a purchase at camp using a camp computer/printer and your credit card.

The Camp Store (Canteen). Trails campers will have access to the camp store on the first and last nights at camp. The Canteen has T-shirts, sweatshirts, backpack chairs, water bottles, snacks (candy, fruit, popcorn), beverages, postcards and stamps, maps, etc.

Christikon's use of campers' images. Unless Christikon is notified in writing to the contrary, the signature of parent/guardian (or adult advisor signing for self) on the Health Form also constitutes a release of all **rights on photos or video recordings** of the named camper (or adult advisor) that are taken by Christikon staff, and grants permission for use of these images in promotion, publicity, or other information.

Packing for Christikon Trails Camps

Pack light, be prepared. Take special care as you prepare. You do not want to carry any more than you need. You will be carrying not only your own gear, but food and equipment for the group.

On the other hand, once you are out in the wilderness, you can't run back home to get something you wish you had taken. And because you may face a wide range of weather conditions, you need to be prepared for both warm and cold, for both wet and dry weather.

As you pack for camp, think carefully: do you really need it? Will you be unprepared without it? Keep in mind **the Three Virtues of Trails Gear**: **lightweight** (the pounds add up quickly), **low bulk** (there's only so much space in your pack), and **multiple use** (whenever you can use something for more than one purpose, you've saved yourself some weight on the back).

Christikon provides you with a backpack, tent, and gear needed for the group (food, cooking utensils, bear bags, rope, maps, stoves, etc.) You need to provide your own personal gear (see the checklist).

Foot wear. Plan to take care of your feet. They are your only means of locomotion. For most hiking, sneakers or tennis shoes simply cannot provide the support and protection your feet need when you are carrying an additional one-fourth to one-third of your body weight. You will need well-fitting hiking shoes that are already broken in. If you buy new hiking shoes, be sure to wear them for several weeks before you come to camp to avoid blisters. Good foot support and protection are the most important considerations.

You want to have several changes of **socks** with you. Sometimes hikers wear two sets at a time, a thicker pair over a thinner set. It can help keep your foot from sliding around in your shoe. Wool or synthetic fabrics are better at wicking moisture than cotton.

You will also need sturdy sandals or similar light-but-secure footwear (no flip-flops) for crossing creeks and for use around the campsite.

Sleeping Bag. You want a sleeping bag that is as warm and lightweight as possible, made specifically for backpacking if possible. Look for the temperature ratings to compare between various bags in the same brand and try to avoid bringing bulky sleeping bags if you can.

Sleeping Pad. This can be either closed-cell or open-cell foam. There are some inexpensive ones available, as well as some more elaborate ones (ex. self-inflating). Lightweight and insulating capacity are important considerations.

Clothing. Be prepared for extremes of weather. While we hope you have warm, sunny days, you may have to face a snowstorm. Generally, the nights get cool in the high country, sometimes near or below freezing.

It is best to have clothing that you can layer for better insulation. Wool and synthetic fiber fabrics make excellent choices, while cotton fabrics insulate very little and take a long time to dry. A **stocking cap** and **gloves or mittens** are also good to bring along.

A lightweight rain jacket/rain gear is essential. The camp has a limited number of ponchos available; but we do not have enough for everyone, so have your own if possible.

It is good to pack most of your items in small plastic bags, to help protect against wetness. You might also want a large garbage bag to use as a pack cover at night or in the rain.

Insect Repellent. Because mosquitos become quite active in the high country, you will want insect repellent. Some even like to have a hat with mosquito netting.

What to take to Camp: Packing Checklist

This checklist reflects a common experience of backpackers and should be helpful as you prepare for your time with us at Christikon. We are mindful that individual needs, budgets and preferences may vary, but please use this list as a packing guide.

Basic equipment:

- Hiking shoes
- Sneakers or sandals (not "flip-flops") for stream crossings and walking around the campsite.
- Sleeping bag and stuff sack
- Sleeping pad
- Light rain gear (jacket, poncho, etc.)

Clothing (be prepared for extremes of weather):

- Socks for hiking
- Underwear
- Upper-body: (shirt, jacket, sweater, sweat shirt, down or fleece vest.)
T-shirts are fine for warm weather and are typical hiking wear. But have something for cool nights and nasty weather. Consider combinations: windbreaker & sweater & T-shirt; or rain jacket & sweatshirt & long-sleeved underwear & T-shirt; or jacket & vest & sweater, etc.
- Hiking shorts. Most people wear shorts much of the time.
- Long pants for cold weather and to protect against evening mosquitos. Jeans will work, but don't provide much warmth when they are wet. Some prefer to have wool pants. Some prefer to have lightweight rain pants and use them with long underwear (Remember: multiple use).
- Gloves or mittens; stocking cap.

Other items:

- Mosquito repellent. Some like a hat with mosquito netting too.
- Sunscreen. Very important! At higher elevations you are more likely to get a serious sunburn, even on cloudy days.
- Small flashlight (spare batteries)
- Toothbrush and toothpaste, soap (biodegradable is best), comb, etc.
- Small towel, washcloth
- Kleenex (travel pack), handkerchief, or bandana

Also consider:

- Bath towel for showering at camp (you can leave it at camp while you are out on the trail).
- Camera (most will use their phone)
- Foot powder
- Lip protection (Chapstick, etc.)
- Sunglasses or sun visor or cap
- Long underwear (polypropylene, fleece, etc.)
- Pen or pencil (for journaling)
- Fishing gear (see information on fishing)
- Plastic bags (see packing considerations)

What NOT to take to Camp:

Music players, including Bluetooth speakers. If you bring these to camp, we will keep them safe for you while you are with us and return them to you when you depart.

Pets.

Hunting knives.

Firearms or ammunition.

Fireworks or firecrackers (they are illegal).

Alcohol, illegal drugs, and smoking or chewing tobacco are not permitted.

Also, it is not wise to bring large quantities of snack food on the trail. At the main camp, all personal food must be stored in the canteen. On the trail, all personal food must go in the bear bag when you reach your campsite.