

Silver Lake Parent Information Guide



Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center
223 Low Rd.
Sharon, CT 06069

Phone: 860-364-5526
Fax: 860-364-1000

Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer
Executive Director
ryang@silverlakect.org



www.silverlakect.org

Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center is the year-round Outdoor Ministry of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Welcome to Silver Lake! If you've never been here before, or if you're coming back for the umpteenth time, you're in for a treat! Our dedicated summer staff are ready to help you experience incredible, fun-filled times with new friends and great stuff to do in the magnificent beauty of God's creation, and to help you discover your spiritual gifts. We are grateful you'll be joining the adventure of Silver Lake this summer. In this booklet, we've explained the nuts and bolts of what you and your parents need to know to have a successful time, to bring what you need, and to find out how to get here!

Please read the whole guide, and feel free to call us or email us with any questions you have. Come back often, and enjoy what's been so special, for many generations, about coming to The Lake. See you this summer.

**Peace in Christ,
Rev. Ryan Gackenheimer
Executive Director**

Inclusivity Statement

Silver Lake Camp and Retreat Center strives to create an intentional, welcoming, Christian community accessible to all. The staff and Board of Directors believe that exposure to diverse expressions of humanity is beneficial to all God's children.

Silver Lake welcomes and affirms campers, staff, volunteers, and guests of all races, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, and sexual orientations. Please be in touch with camp administration so that we can best support you while you are here.

Silver Lake respects the gender identity and preferred names and pronouns of all participants. Mistakes will be made, but Silver Lake does not tolerate the intentional denial of another person's gender identity, preferred names, and pronouns.

All persons, including campers, have a right to privacy. This includes the right to keep private one's transgender status or gender non-conforming presentation at camp. Transgender and gender non-conforming students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much to share private information.

When contacting the parent or guardian of a transgender or gender non-conforming camper, camp staff will use the camper's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the camper's gender assigned at birth unless the camper, parent, or guardian has specified otherwise.

Open House at Silver Lake...

Open House tours for parents and visitors will be held on a Sunday afternoon in May. Check the website for the dates. This is a wonderful opportunity for families and conferees to learn more about Silver Lake and to meet staff. We highly recommend that you attend an Open House, especially if your child will be attending Silver Lake for the first time. If you are unable to attend the Open House and would like a tour of camp, please call the office at 860-364-5526 to arrange a visit.

A Sample Day at Silver Lake...

7:30 a.m.	Morning Dip at the lake (optional)
8:00 a.m.	Wake Up
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	Cabin Clean Up/Composting
9:15 a.m.	Morning Watch/Opening Circle
9:45 a.m.	Conference Programs
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 p.m.	Cabin Quiet Time
2:00 p.m.	Ceramics, Arts & Crafts, Nature, Music, Theater
2:45 p.m.	Camp Store
3:00 p.m.	Swim Time
4:00 p.m.	High or Low ropes/Challenge course
5:00 p.m.	Conference Programs
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 p.m.	All Conference Worship
8:00 p.m.	Evening Programs/Campfires
8:30 pm	Snack time
9:00 p.m. through 10:30 p.m.	In cabin - get ready for bed (depending on grade level)

Please see conference descriptions in the summer calendar for individual conference program themes and special events.

What to bring to Silver Lake . . .

We recommend that each camper bring the following clothing and supplies (enough for a full week – we are only able to do camper laundry on an emergency basis) when attending a conference at Silver Lake:

Bedding/Linen

Sleeping bag or bedding
Pillow
Bath Towels
Washcloths
Beach Towels
Blanket

Toiletries

Shower Caddy
(to carry supplies)
Toothbrush
Toothpaste
Shampoo
Soap
Hairbrush/comb
Insect Repellant
Sunscreen

Clothing

Shirts
Underwear
Socks
Pants
Shorts
Raincoat
Sneakers or closed-toed shoes
(for Challenge Course)
Shower flip-flops
Windbreaker
Swimsuit (s)
Sweatshirt
Face Masks

Supplies

Water Bottle
Bible
Camera
Stationary/stamps
Flashlight
Water Bottle (really, you need a water bottle)

***Everyone who comes to Silver Lake during the summer must have a complete health record. Please see your online registration account for health forms. The Doctor Signature page is good for 2 years from the date of the physical exam. The Medication Authorization form (to dispense medication) must be updated**

annually. Please see the Guide to Forms document that was emailed to you for a complete list of required forms.

COVID-19 Updates...

The most current policies can be found on our website at www.silverlakect.org/covid-19-summer. We are following CDC guidance, which has been changing rapidly, so please refer to the website for the most up-to-date information.

Everyone at Silver Lake will need to show proof of vaccination against Covid-19. If your camper has a medical exemption, please be in touch with Silver Lake as soon as possible.

Silver Lake will follow best practices for Covid mitigation, which may include testing, cohorting, and masking. Exact policies will be determined closer to the summer, when we have a better idea of the state of the pandemic. Please pay attention to email communication from Silver Lake in the months before camp and check the website regularly for updates. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us to get information on current policies.

To ensure the safest environment for everyone, please follow all CDC guidelines for travelers, as well as have your camper continue to wear masks, practice distancing, limit attendance to large gatherings, and monitor your health in the weeks before camp.

Campers who test positive after arriving at Silver Lake will need to be picked up within 6 hours (unless parents are notified after 6 p.m. and live 3 hours or further away, in which case the camper will be isolated overnight). Campers will be housed in a separate cabin until they are picked up by a parent or guardian.

Connecticut Safe Sport Policy: Child Abuse Prevention...

A copy of the Connecticut Safe Sport Policy will be emailed to you ahead of camp. You can also read the policy on our website at www.silverlakect.org/summercamp.

Summer Conference Check-In/Check-Out Times...

Please observe arrival and departure times, as these are busy days when the camp must be cleaned and prepared between the time one group leaves and the next arrives. Arrival and departure times will be staggered. Please arrive on time. Campers who arrive early will be directed to return to Silver Lake at their scheduled time.

To limit the number of people on site, we are asking that families limit who comes to drop-off. Please make sure that all paperwork is completed prior to arrival. You may want to bring a paper copy of your forms in case they are missing online.

What NOT to bring to Silver Lake...

Cell phones are **NOT** permitted and will be confiscated. Please do **NOT** bring: alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, weapons, expensive jewelry, pets, pocket knives, fireworks, gum, candy, food, or valuables, including electronic and handheld devices: cell phones, radios, mp3 players, CD players, beepers, laptops, walkmans, or video games. Silver Lake cannot be responsible for items that may be lost, stolen, or broken.

Insects...

Our programs are held outside as much as possible, which brings us into contact with various biting insects. We recommend sending a non-aerosol insect repellent (make sure that it works against ticks) with your child with instructions to apply daily. Counselors will help with reminders. As in all parts of Connecticut, ticks can be found at Silver Lake. Please instruct your child in how to do a tick check. Campers are encouraged to do a tick check daily, and we have mirrors with posted reminders in every bathroom. If your child is bitten by a tick, they will be taken to the nurse,

who will remove it. You will receive a “tick letter” when you pick up your child with information on after care.

Deans and Counselors ...

In the tradition of United Church of Christ summer camps and conferences, Silver Lake Deans and Counselors are volunteer leaders predominantly from UCC Churches. They make a one-week (or more) commitment to Silver Lake as a form of service to the church and the Christian community. Deans attend a training weekend in March, develop their conference program, and recruit their volunteer staff of counselors. Counselors are at least 16 years old and must attend training sessions at Silver Lake and do online training as well. All Deans and Counselors are interviewed and provide Silver Lake with references. We perform background checks on all volunteers over 18.

Summer Staff ...

Silver Lake’s summer staff serve in support roles to the summer conferences. They are the lifeguards, ropes course facilitators, kitchen staff, program staff, maintenance staff, and housekeeping staff. All employees over the age of 18 pass mandatory background checks and undergo intensive training, as well as become certified in First Aid and CPR. By the end of training, our staff are well equipped to meet the needs of our volunteers and campers.

Cabin and Bunking Assignments...

We have found throughout our long and rich history of summer conferences that campers make new friends faster and easier if they room with new people. We encourage parents to help their children understand that part of the Silver Lake experience is making new friends. If your child registers for a conference with a close friend, please assure the children that they will see each other throughout the day even if they are not assigned to the same cabin or bunkroom.

Silver Lake offers all-gender cabins. During registration, you will be asked to indicate your willingness to be placed in an all-gender cabin. All-gender cabins will be supervised by trained counselors. All members of the cabin will be provided with private changing areas.

If a participant requests to be assigned to a cabin better matching their gender expression, Silver Lake will honor that request.

If you have questions about all-gender cabins, please contact us at slcrc@silverlakeect.org.

Scholarships and Financial Aid...

Scholarships and financial aid are available through many local churches. Please check with your local church regarding assistance in paying for a conference at Silver Lake. Scholarships are also available, on a limited basis, through the Scholarship Fund of Silver Lake. The scholarship application is available through your online account. Please call us for more information. Money need not be a barrier for attending.

Medical Needs...

Please fill out the online Camper Health History form for each of your children attending camp. It can be accessed through your online registration account.

Your child will still need to be examined by a physician, who must sign a form indicating an exam has been performed. You may download Silver Lake's form while logged into your account, or you may substitute another form (school form, state form, doctor's office form). In accordance with American Camp Association standards, a signed physical is current for two (2) years from the date of the exam. If you are not able to upload the Silver Lake form to your online account, please send it to Silver Lake in advance of your conference. Fax: 860-364-1000. Email: ruthc@silverlakeect.org. Mail: Silver Lake attn: Ruth, 223 Low Road, Sharon, CT 06069.

Connecticut Law prohibits Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center from admitting any child without a current health record signed by a physician. Please make sure that the health record is updated with proper emergency contacts, allergies, etc.

If your child is taking prescription medication, you must provide a Medication Authorization form completed by the doctor who prescribed it. As with the Doctor's Signature form, you may download Silver Lake's form while logged into your account. If you are not able to upload the form to your account, please send it to Silver Lake in advance of your conference. State law requires that all prescription medication be properly labeled in its original container with only the amount of medication needed for the week. Please do not bring over-the-counter medications such as Benadryl and Tylenol as a supply of these medications is available in the Health Center, from the camp nurse. A full list of the medications the nurse will have stocked can be found on the online Camper Health History form under the heading "Medication." A Medication Authorization form will be needed to administer any supplements (including vitamins) or non-prescription medication not covered by the nurse's standing orders.

Instructions on how to complete your health record will be sent to you in an email with the confirmation of your registration. If you have further questions, please call our office for clarification: 860-364-5526. All forms should be completed and turned in to Silver Lake (electronically or in paper form) at least two weeks before you arrive at camp.

A full-time nurse is on site for medication administration and minor medical needs. If there is a medical emergency, every effort will be made to contact you (parent/guardian) immediately. Your child's medical insurance (or yours) will be used first by the physician or emergency medical service. Silver Lake provides limited medical coverage for accidental injury, subject to the group policy terms and conditions. Pre-

existing conditions must be covered by the parent's medical plan. Conferees who are not medically restricted are expected to participate fully in all activities, programs, meals, worship, and recreation.

Mental Health...

Mental health is as important to a camper's success as physical health. Silver Lake employs a licensed therapist, fondly known as our "Feelings Specialist," who is available to work with campers who are struggling to transition to life at camp. The Feelings Specialist is able to identify campers who need to be referred to help outside of camp and will work with a family to ensure the camper is receiving appropriate support.

Staff and volunteers are trained to recognize signs of campers needing support and to refer them to the Camp Nurse and/or the Feelings Specialist.

If your camper is being treated for mental health concerns ahead of camp, please be in touch with the Program Director about a plan to ensure their success at Silver Lake.

Special Needs...

Silver Lake Summer Conferences provide an environment to nurture children and youth of many backgrounds and abilities so that all may have the opportunity to share in our Christian Community. It is our sincerest wish to ensure a positive conference experience for all God's children.

We strongly encourage parental involvement ahead of their conference to ensure programs and facilities meet the needs of your individual child. If your child has special physical, mental, developmental, or dietary needs that require special support, please contact the Program Director prior to the start of the conference. As a home for inclusivity, we will do our best to reasonably accommodate requests to ensure safety and comfort of our campers and community.

At the same time, it is important to know that Silver Lake is not a special needs camp and is not equipped to support campers who would need one-on-one support. When considering whether Silver Lake is the right fit for your camper, please keep in mind the following expectations that our campers are responsible for:

- Campers are able to perform daily hygiene tasks, including dressing self, brushing teeth independently, showering independently, and self-regulating use of the toilet. *For our younger campers, we understand and expect our counseling staff to be present for mild support and guidance during these actions*
 - We are able to support chronic bedwetters. Please contact the Program Director to put a plan in place.
- Campers are able to self-regulate at meal times and be willing to try new foods. Missing the comfort foods of home can be difficult for many campers. We hope to encourage your child to try something new, but campers are expected to eat something substantial at every meal (ie, cereal, sunbutter and jelly, etc).
 - We are able to accommodate a range of special diets, but extreme restrictions will have to be supplemented with food provided by the camper's family. Please contact the Program Director if your camper has a restrictive diet.
- Camper is able to function as a part of a high-paced, stimulating environment. Our programs are designed to find the excitement of camp in every moment. Some activities might be overstimulating for campers with sensitivity to noise and lack of structure. There is intentional quiet time daily, but campers are exposed to high paced and fast energy activities daily. At Silver Lake, we go with the flow and welcome the next adventure.
- Camper is able to self-regulate emotions safely and look to adults for support when in a community setting. Camp can be a lot to digest in a week's time. Emotions can run high, and we look to our campers to be leaders when problem solving. Our expectation is for campers to always involve adults when a serious conflict arises to ensure safety of our community.

- Camper is able to sleep in a cabin with other campers.

In addition to special needs, please inform the Program Director of any special circumstances that your child may be facing prior to arriving at Silver Lake. A recent death of a loved one, family divorce, or a change in medication may contribute to a child's behavior while at Silver Lake, and any information you share with us will assist us in understanding and meeting the needs of your child. All information shared with the Program Director will be handled confidentially.

Misconduct...

All participants are asked to read and sign a Behavioral Covenant as part of the registration process. This Covenant explains Silver Lake's expectations for how campers will engage with each other, their counselors, and Silver Lake. You can review the Covenant through your registration account.

Any camper who uses illegal drugs or alcohol, abusive language, promotes or participates in sexual behavior/misconduct, or demonstrates aggressive/violent behavior will be asked to leave Silver Lake immediately. The camper's parents/guardians and church pastor will be notified so that counseling or other relevant services may be arranged to assist the camper and family. All issues related to misconduct will be managed by the Executive Director, or an Alternate Director if needed.

Any camper who is dismissed from Silver Lake for misconduct will need to be picked up within 6 hours (unless parents are notified after 6 p.m. and live 3 hours or further away, in which case the camper will be isolated overnight). Campers will be housed apart from their Conference until they are picked up by a parent or guardian.

Missing Home...

Sometimes children experience homesickness, especially if they have not been away from home or have not been to Silver Lake before. There are

several effective ways of helping your child work through the sadness of being away from home. Sometimes this may take a few days, so please be prepared! Based on our experience with children and missing home, we suggest the following strategies:

- Please do not promise your child that you will come and pick them up if they call home. This may set them up for failure.
- Understand that there are many people working to help your child have a successful experience: Summer staff, the camp Nurse, chaplain, the Executive Director, the Program Director.
- Extreme cases of homesickness are managed by the Executive Director and the Program Director. If it is advisable, we will call you to discuss options about how to manage your child's situation.
- It is helpful if you make immediate contact with your child by sending a letter early in the week (some parents prepare them ahead of time so they can be mailed early enough to arrive on the Monday or Tuesday of the child's conference). You may also fax a message to your child at 860-364-1000. Please limit faxed messages to one page *without* a cover page and be sure to note what conference they are attending. Please keep the message upbeat and do not focus on how much you miss your child, as this can trigger homesickness.
- If you, as the parent, are really missing your child, please do not let on! Of course, let them know that they are loved, but encourage them to make new friends and to have a great time at Silver Lake!
- For further tips on avoiding homesickness, check the links on our website, www.silverlakeect.org/faq.

Calling Home ...

We have found that children can avoid feelings of homesickness by getting involved in the conference. Conferees are discouraged from making telephone calls home, as this invariably makes them miss home more acutely.

Swim Tests ...

Silver Lake provides two swimming areas at the waterfront. There is a shallow entrance area for campers who do not wish to take or who do not complete the swim test, or who are beginner swimmers. The deeper swimming area is available for those who have successfully completed the swim test.

The swim test is optional and can be taken at most swim times.

The swim test consists of the following:

- Swimming 6 lengths between the docks, any front stroke above water, nonstop.
- Treading water for 60 seconds.

If a child does not successfully complete the swim test on their first try, they are encouraged to try again.

Camp Store, Care Packages, Spending Money...

Each day, your child will have a chance to visit the Camp Store to purchase a snack, drink, or Silver Lake memorabilia. On Missions Day, they will have the opportunity to donate some camp store money to the summer missions that they learn about on Tuesday. We suggest a total of \$25+ per week, which includes a contribution to Missions (typical snack/beverage cost per day is \$3).

We encourage you to set up your child's Camp Store account online before you get to camp. You can replenish your Camp Store account during the session through your registration account or by calling the camp office.

- Log into your account.
- Click the menu icon (3 horizontal lines) in the upper left.
- Select Camp Store.
- Select Store Deposits.
- Follow the directions from there.

The Camp Store account system is designed to prevent lost or stolen money during the week. On Saturday at checkout, any money above \$10 left in the Camp Store will be returned in cash with your camper. Remaining balances under \$10 will be considered a donation unless you call the office by 3 pm on Thursday before checkout.

The Silver Lake Camp Store encourages parents to purchase our Care & Share Packages and photo collection in advance. You can order one online through your registration account. For instructions on how to add a Care & Share Package or photo collection to your registration, please see the FAQ (in the footer of any page in your registration account). Care & Share Packages must be purchased by the first Monday of your camp session; the digital photo collection may be purchased through the end of the camp session. We cannot accept checks.

Lost and Found Items...

The very best way to prevent the loss of an item while at Silver Lake is to label all articles of clothing, towels, bedding, and other personal items. If your child is missing a particular item, the staff will make every effort to help find the item in the Lost and Found. At the end of each week, prior to and during departure, all items from the Lost and Found are displayed near the Summer Office and Camp Store.

All unclaimed, unmarked clothing/personal items are held at Silver Lake for 30 days. If unclaimed after 30 days, they are donated to charity.

Mail and Faxes...

We encourage you to write to your child at Silver Lake. You may also send a fax to your child at 860-364-1000. Please limit faxes to one page, without a cover sheet. Please be sure to write the name of your child's conference on the fax. Mail may be sent to:

Conferee's Name
Title of Conference
Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center
223 Low Road
Sharon, CT 06069

Transportation...

Transportation to and from Silver Lake is the responsibility of each conferee and their family. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we are asking that families transport family members by themselves. If someone other than a parent or guardian is dropping off or picking up your child, please add them as an authorized pickup on your registration account. Authorized pickups must be added to your account by the Wednesday before pickup.

Parent/Guardian Visiting Silver Lake. . .

In our experience, we have found that parents/guardians visiting their children during their conference can be extremely disruptive to the camper's experience. Additionally, visitors to Silver Lake will already be limited due to concerns relating to COVID-19. Therefore, Parents/Guardians may only visit Silver Lake during their child's stay if prior authorization is obtained from the Executive Director.

Area Lodging...

Some families have found it helpful to stay in the area the night before picking up their children at departure time on Saturday morning. Here a few local lodging facilities that we recommend:

Wake Robin Inn
Lakeville
860-435-2000
www.wakerobininn.com

Mary Stuart House
Goshen
860-491-2260
www.marystuarthouse.com

Sharon Country Inn
(Formerly Sharon Motor Lodge)
Sharon
860-364-0036
www.sharoncountryinn.com

Camping Facilities:

Housatonic State Park
Cornwall
860-672-6772

Lone Oaks Camp Site
East Canaan
860-824-7051

Travel Directions for Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center...

From Torrington:

- From Exit #44 on Route 8: Follow signs to Route 4 West. (from the South, go straight at the end of the ramp to the second light and turn left.)
- CT Route 4 into the center of Sharon, four way stop.
- Turn right on to Main Street; follow town green on your right.
- The road curves to the right, slight down hill, turn left on to Low Road (before the gas station)
- Follow Low Road to Silver Lake (ap. 1.5 miles)

From New Haven:

- Route 34 to Route 8 – continue with directions from Torrington.

From Waterbury:

- Route 8 North – continue with directions from Torrington.

From Danbury:

- Route 7 North to Cornwall Bridge and the intersection with Route 4
- Turn left on to Route 4, travel on Route 4 to the center of Sharon
- Follow directions above from center of Sharon

From Hartford:

- Route 84 West to Route 4 (Exit for Farmington)
- Follow Route 4 through Torrington, directions as above from Torrington, Route 4.

From New London:

- Route 9 North to Route I 91 South (exit 20S)
- I 91 to merge with I 691
- I 691 to Route 84 West to Waterbury
- Route 8 (exit 20) in Waterbury
- Follow directions as above from Route 8 in Torrington above.

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