

Sierra Pines Camp ~ Our Story

In the early 1940's, some sixty-five years ago, the leadership of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church started a camp on land that was and is a part of the El Dorado National Forest. The camp, operating at 6,800 feet elevation, was named "Camp Pinecrest" and was operated for many years to primarily serve the needs of Seventh Day Adventists in Northern California and Nevada. As the main Lodge was built it is interesting to note that the fireplace includes rocks from all over the world that were provided by missionaries serving in distant lands in order to save lives for Christ. The fact that the camp was and is a mission remains even yet today.

With time comes change, and in the mid 1970's the Seventh Day Adventists decided to sell the camp and move down Highway 50 to Leoni Meadows. The American Baptist Churches of the West saw a great opportunity. The leadership of ABCW had wanted to add a winter camping program for some time. Under the leadership of Executive Minister Robert Rasmussen, the American Baptist Churches of the West purchased the camp and started operation in the fall of 1977. The name was changed to Sierra Pines Baptist Camp. The camp was led by Reverend Douglas Siden of ABCW for nearly 20 years. This was made possible because of the hard work and assistance of on-site directors, ABCW staff in Oakland, and volunteers who all made valuable contributions and improvements to Sierra Pines. Over time, though, interest waned and financial support faltered. In 2003 ABCW made the decision that they would like to sell their camps but continue to use them as customers. Thankfully, they graciously allowed the Board of Sierra Pines Baptist Camp to strategize and purchase the camp from them at a very reasonable discounted price and thus create a new Sierra Pines Camp that was completely independent of any denominational relationship. The transaction was seen as a win/win situation as program camps and rental groups with years of traditions were allowed to continue in a smooth transition, while opening many doors to others for the first time.

On March 14, 2004 the new Sierra Pines Camp, Inc. was incorporated as a non-profit organization in California. Shortly thereafter, the camp was awarded non-profit status by the IRS and was a certified 501c3 organization.

The founding Board of seven volunteer members, successfully transferred the camp to independence and a new era in camping was renewed. From 2004 to 2008 the camp operated as an independent Christian Camp and significant improvements, policy revision and site clean-up occurred. The focus of the camp was primarily to youth and children because of the elevation, slope and condition of a rustic camp. Many young people and adults came to Christ and chose to enter the ministry from a diverse group of churches, denominations and non-profit organizations such as William Jessup University, Campus Crusade, Campus Life and Awana. Despite the blessings there was always a shortage of cash and a long list of needed improvements and equipment, and without stakeholders it was difficult to raise support and obtain professional marketing and management.

In early 2008 the Board recognized that in order for Sierra Pines Camp to be all that it should be that a partnership or strategic alliance was needed.

Board President Lesa Johnson approached four large organizations and ultimately the Board offered the camp to one that was local and had a history of using our camp over the years. This partnership, with an eventual ownership by the North American Baptist “NorCal” Association, was led at that time by the head of NorCal, Rev. Fred Jantz. Fred had always wanted a camp that was closer to the churches in the Association and had hopes that a mission field reasonably priced would be created that would allow member to serve and youth to be trained up to follow Christ and serve future generations.

Today Sierra Pines Camp exists because many have carried the torch and continued the ministry on the mountain. Thank you to all who have supported the camp. We have always existed to create a place and space so that people of all ages could get away from the distractions of live and concentrate on Christ. This will always be true, so make it your camp and spend some time alone under the trees. Look up. May the peace of God be with you today and always and we thank you for keeping the ministry, staff and leadership of Sierra Pines Camp in your prayers, always.

Written By Lesa Johnson,
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