

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Grand Mesa Christian Association

The purpose of the Grand Mesa Christian Association, as indicated by the by-laws and actions over the last sixty plus years, has been to provide an area and facilities for Christian camps in an inspirational mountain setting. The Forest Service Special Use Permit establishes the authority to develop and operate the camp and with this goes the responsibility for care and maintenance of the facilities and area as well.

Originally the camp was known as the Epworth League and operated solely by the Methodists. Development and operation was quite simple and associated costs were also relatively modest. As time went on it became apparent that capital infusion was needed to better develop and operate the camp in the future years. In the late 1940;s it was decided it was desirable to open the membership to other Denominations. Several indicated interest ,but finally only the Western Colorado American Baptists actually joined with the Methodists to form the Grand Mesa Christian Association. For many years the governing committee was quite informal with most members serving indefinite terms for long periods of time. Usually there was one meeting year in January . Association business was conducted by a “business manager” and camp development by the Building Committee Chairman. In 1952, a master plan for buildings and grounds was adopted and the present building layout began to emerge with development costs being equally shared by the member Denominations. Much of the work was done by volunteers, but major construction was done under an arrangement with a construction company. Utility development and installation was done under the codes established at the time. Fortunately, the camp’s two sewage treatment systems were well-designed and have performed adequately at the high elevation. Problems did develop with electrical distribution lines, which were made of aluminum wire, and they have had to be systematically replaced. Other facilities and utilities, including buildings, water systems, sanitation and operation procedures have been constantly upgraded as funds and opportunity have allowed.

As the surrounding areas grew in population and economic conditions changed, needs and expectations of the camp also changed and became more sophisticated. For many years, as noted above, most business was conducted by the elected Association Business Manager and Treasurer. A Camp Caretaker, appointed by the Business Manager with approval by the Board, was the Association “on site” representative and served with small pay for the eight or ten week operation season. The responsibilities of the Caretaker (Camp Manager) position included overseeing the Association’s facility operation, including utilities, roads and grounds, hauling trash and garbage to the county land fill, minor maintenance and repair of buildings, checking fire extinguishers, cleanup as necessary between camps, supervision of dishwashing procedures, cleanup of restrooms and kitchen floor, meter reading between camps and preparation of bills and collection of fees from each camp. Scheduling of special events, such as weddings, picnics, etc. has been handled by this position during the summer months. Lodging for the caretaker has been provided by the Association with the Camp in progress providing meals while they are in session.

The 70's saw the GMCA enter into an era of change; the fuel rich Western Colorado began to develop energy sources and with it came population increases and economic growth. As camp usage grew and campers and directors came from more diverse backgrounds, more services were expected. To help provide these additional services, plans were made to build the long-delayed Lodge building. However, a record snowfall in 1978 brought down the thirty-year-old Dining Hall. Determination to hold summer camps was strong so not only were the summer camps held, but the Dining Hall was also rebuilt at the same time. The next year, the GMCA Lodge was started and completed in three years. For the first time, the Association grounds were opened for winter camps which used the Lodge for housing, food service and as an activity center. (Use for the winter of '82-83 included 16 weekends and 841 camper days, for the winter of '83-84 the camp was used 12 weekends and 654 camper days). Both Methodist and Baptist Camps added a fourth week of camps to their summer camp program. Above average snowfall continued and in 1983 the Columbine Recreation Hall fell victim as its roof succumbed to the heavy snow load. Replacement of this structure took two years due to the short available work season and the need for special design. Plans were made at this time to build the much needed camp maintenance building and construction started in 1985 with completion scheduled in 1987.

During the above period, GMCA business was handled pretty much as described earlier except, most of the time, there were two and sometimes three people assisting with GMCA operations. Lodging and minimum wages were paid and meals were provided by summer camps in progress. Additionally, the Association building committee contracted the services of an independent building manager to oversee and perform the camp rebuilding and building program.

As has historically been the case, the Summer Camps were operated by the group or denomination conducting the camp. This included organization, programming, providing food, electric, propane, paper and other supplies, directors, ministers, missionaries, cooks, kitchen help, nurses, counselors, activities conducted, plus routine clean-up of the cabins and most buildings. GMCA responsibility included providing the grounds, utility systems and facilities, as well as the "on site" manager as required by the Social Services Agency to assure that all state requirements for "youth camps" were being met.

Starting in 1982 the economic conditions in the country deteriorated and the energy "boom" ended. The area population declined, and with it, the attendance of camps. Unfortunately, costs of providing services did not reduce accordingly, nor did the demand for such services. Additionally, insurance costs rose dramatically and to help offset the combination of the above factors, the GMCA Trustees adjusted fees for summer camps and required payments based upon a minimum of 100 campers per day. The GMCA Operation Committee reduced its paid positions to one person and this position was used only for the summer camps held in June, July and August. Both Methodists and Baptists returned to the three week schedule, but the Methodists continued Camp Hope West (with all denominations invited to participate) which provided for a camping experience for youngsters and adults with disabilities. (The minimum camper numbers requirements under fees was removed for this special camp).

Most GMCA services were and are provided on a volunteer basis; this includes Association Trustees, committee members and those who assist with work projects and retreats.

Grand Mesa Christian Association Camp Mission

The Christian Religious Mission of the Association Includes but is not limited to:

- Providing within a Christian environment and in a natural forested setting, opportunities for worship of God, spiritual experiences, Christian education, personal and/or group growth and physical betterment through camps, seminars, conferences, and other appropriate programs. This mission outreach is for all persons of all ages. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Christian religious mission of the Association includes the following:
 - Evangelistic outreach, particularly to youth, which will lead individuals to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
 - Bible study and Christian fellowship to develop lifelong patterns and commitment to Christian discipleship;
 - Individual and group development events and physical and spiritual refreshments to encourage all individuals to a lifetime of witnessing for Jesus Christ in their family, church, community, and world;
 - To encourage a lifelong commitment to faithful stewardship of talents, time, and resources.

The mission is to be facilitated by utilizing the Association grounds and buildings to serve individuals and groups from member denomination churches, from other Christian churches and organizations, from public and private educational organizations, for retreats, weddings, and reunions organized by individuals, families, or schools, for non-profit community service organizations, and for any other groups whose principles are not in conflict with those of the Association of its member denominations.

(Approved 9/8/90, passed 1/8/94 and attached to the Bylaws)

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THE SEVEN FOUNDATIONS OF UNITED METHODIST CAMP AND RETREAT MINISTRIES

1. To provide intentional places and experiences apart;
2. Extend genuine Christian hospitality and community;
3. Nurture Christian faith and discipleship;
4. Develop Christian spiritual leaders;
5. Teach creation care and appreciation;
6. Collaborate with United Methodist churches and agencies; and
7. Inspire and equip all guests to do love and service.