

Southern Baptists consider sale of Glorieta conference center

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GLORIETA, N.M. (ABP) - The Southern Baptist Convention is scaling back operations at [Glorieta Conference Center](#) and considering sale of the 2,100-acre campus near Santa Fe, N.M.

Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources voted ~~Glorieta Conference~~ ^{Center} recently to cut back from year-round operations to summer-only programs for student groups at Glorieta, one of two national conference centers owned by the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. The change, which goes into effect Nov. 1, will reduce staff from 23 to seven employees.

LifeWay officials said Glorieta has been losing money for years. LifeWay receives no funding from the denomination and can no longer afford to subsidize a ministry that has finished in the black just once in the last 25 years, according to a statement.

Officials said there are no plans to close Glorieta completely, but trustees are exploring options for disposition of the property including sale or alliances with other ministries.

"Significant changes in the training needs and practices of local churches, the challenges of travel to Glorieta, continued rising fuel and utility costs, an aging infrastructure, the volatile economy, and changes in state convention structures have combined to make financial viability increasingly difficult," said Jerry Rhyne, LifeWay's chief financial officer.

"As a matter of fiscal stewardship, LifeWay must be prudent controlling costs and managing resources in order to provide biblical solutions for life to individuals and churches in the most effective way."

Rhyne said LifeWay's other retreat center, Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina, is more accessible, continues to show a profit and will not be affected by the trustee decision.

Located in part of the Rocky Mountain chain, Glorieta evokes nostalgia for generations of Southern Baptists. Hundreds of thousands of children, youth and adults have retreated there for spiritual renewal since the camp opened in 1952. About 3,000 campers a year make spiritual decisions like professions of faith and rededications. More than 75,000 individuals have accepted a call to ministry at Glorieta.

The Southern Baptist Convention voted in 1949 to establish a western conference center in addition to Ridgecrest, which opened in 1907. Originally 1,200 acres and named Glorieta Assembly, the camp grew to become one of the largest Christian conference centers in the country. Together the two conference centers host about 100,000 campers a year.

LifeWay trustees adopted a 15-year revitalization plan for both camps in 2000, which included new buildings, renovation and demolition of facilities falling out of use. In 2009 Glorieta shifted to a new operational model that allowed it to stay open year-round but focused on smaller ministries and events during the winter to better fit demand. At the time rumors swirled that Glorieta was closing, but officials said in Baptist Press that "nothing could be further from the truth."

Rhyne said if selling the property turns out to be the best option, any sale would have to be approved by the board of trustees. In 2009 trustees approved sale of 12.5 acres to the Glorieta Condominium Development, Inc. LifeWay officials said the conference center didn't need the land and

expected a pre-tax profit of \$1.3 million to go toward the \$27 million price tag for the revitalization of Glorieta and Ridgecrest.