

# 2nd Opinion: Guarded, but joyful, anticipation for Glorieta

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The very word “Glorieta” triggers powerful memories of joy and thankfulness for thousands of Texas Baptists. In the fertile soil of the Glorieta Conference Center, untold numbers of us discovered a deeper meaning to the Christian life.

Perched in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in New Mexico, Glorieta fed body, mind and soul. We as a family frequently enjoyed the bounty of the conference center, including children’s activities, adult conferences, Prayer Garden walks and the simple opportunity to inhale the mountain air.



Wayne Grant So when rumors became reality and LifeWay Christian Resources—originally the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board—decided to dispose of Glorieta, we, along with many other Texas Baptists, were concerned. When the conference center was sold to Camp Eagle, a Christian nonprofit headquartered in Rocksprings, we wondered, “Is this the end of Glorieta for us?”

Our family shed tears. We had no complaint against the Camp Eagle organization. In fact, our church youth group participated in programs at the facility in Rocksprings. Our sadness was over the fact this valuable property no longer belonged to us as Baptists, and most of all, we feared

we no longer would be able to ramble through the Prayer Garden, worship in the hallowed Holcomb Auditorium, or hike the trail to Glorieta Baldy.

So out of a sense of nostalgia, I visited the Glorieta website from time to time. In December 2014, I noted an announcement for a couples retreat during Valentine's Day weekend. After a brief "Why don't we?" chat, Veronica and I signed up for the retreat. Maybe we would find out for ourselves what was happening in the foothills of New Mexico.

### **A familiar 16-minute drive**

We flew to Albuquerque, rented a car, spent a day in Santa Fe, and then made the familiar 16-minute drive to Glorieta.

To our surprise, the experience of the next three days calmed many fears and ignited hope:

- We were pleasantly surprised to discover all the key buildings retained their familiar names: New Mexico Hall, Holcomb Auditorium, Chaparral, Hall of States, Texas Hall, Thunderbird.
- The director of family camps told retreat participants the current administration and staff are deeply aware of the traditions and legacy of Glorieta. Their goal, he added, was to honor this legacy and build on it.
- Signs of renewal and change were everywhere on the campus. The Hall of States where we stayed had been remodeled. The rooms were clean and comfortable—comparable to a quality motel room. The Thunderbird apartments are being gutted and rebuilt. A large family camp is under construction, incorporating a few of the older structures. Challenging recreational facilities are springing up all over the campus.
- The public face of Glorieta is young staffers in their 20s and 30s,

assisted by a large cadre of college-age volunteers. Their excitement and energy are contagious.

- Glorieta continues to host youth camps, church groups and special conferences. A major emphasis is the family camp program, which aims at providing a destination vacation experience with a spiritual emphasis for families.

- Obviously, times are different; it's no longer the 1960s when we first visited and fell in love with Glorieta. Some changes brought resigned headshakes from gray-haired grandparents such as Veronica and me. The peaceful lake now is full of water-sports equipment; zip lines run from the roof of Holcomb Auditorium to a distant spot among the pines. The old fire station is a contemporary coffee shop. The wilderness is opened to a variety of adventure experiences.

### **Sigh of relief**

With a deep sigh of relief, we sensed a continued commitment to spiritual growth through all the programs and activities. We were reassured by the Glorieta mission statement: "Our *mission* is to inspire Christlike change through **outdoor adventure, authentic relationships** and **biblical truth.**" **That is what Glorieta always has been to us.**

We left with guarded, but joyful, anticipation. **Maybe, just maybe, we can go home again.**

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