

Strategic Plan for GP Camps Inc.

Vision Statement

To provide a safe and sacred place apart from everyday distractions to encounter God while developing Christian spiritual leadership and nurturing each other's faith journeys.

GP Camps Inc. is an important component of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference's commitment to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through emphasis of 7 foundations in camping and retreat ministries in the Great Plains Conference.

Missional priorities to meet this vision

1. Develop Christian Spiritual Leaders
2. Provide Intentional Places Apart to Encounter God
3. Extend Genuine Christian Hospitality and Community
4. Nurture Christian Faith and Discipleship
5. Teach Creation Care and Appreciation
6. Collaborate with United Methodist Churches and Agencies
7. Inspire and Equip Guests to do Love and Justice

***Our God sized goals are not meant to be punitive; they are meant to be supportive.

1.) Great Plains Camps Develop Christian Spiritual Leaders through: Teaching staff, counselors, and campers – to tell their full story + pray openly

This is how we Develop Spiritual Leaders:

- a) Teach Staff, Volunteers, and Site Council Members to role model being Great Spiritual Leaders.

Measurable Outcomes:

- a) 2015 stories told in 2015, Share those stories in GP Connect, Churches, Annual Conference, in the Communities that the camps serve. Continue this trend every year leading up to 2020.

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) Have at least 1 camper from every Great Plains United Methodist Church. If there are not any youth in the church, help those churches identify and sponsor a child in need of camp in their area.

Camps Action Plans

- Adequately outlining roles and identify key paid and volunteer staff positions.
- Provide appropriately enhanced education and training for staff to allow all to perform at their highest level
- Incorporate strategic plan goals and objectives into staff job descriptions and evaluations to successfully align actions with priorities.
- Move to increase pastoral support and participation in confirmation camps during the summer with the goal of offering a confirmation camp every week of the summer by 2020 with completion of a confirmation cabin to house the programs. In 2015 two confirmation sessions will be offered with direct district blessing and support.
- Developing and publicizing a “Share your Story” page on our website to encourage alumni to tell their story about the impact of Christian Camping on the Spiritual lives.
- The promotion of “Camp Ambassadors” to local UMC’s. This program will encourage current campers to speak at their local churches about their camp experience and encourage others to participate in camp events.

2.) Great Plains Camps Provide Intentional Places Apart to Encounter God through: Providing safe and sacred space for decision making, hearing God's word, practicing Christian leadership, and fostering growth and involvement in local churches and communities.

This is how we Provide Intentional Places Apart to Encounter God.

- a) Be an intentionally unplugged community while at camp.
- b) Introducing unique unplugged worship in the diversity of outdoor places among friends

Measurable Outcome:

- a) Be ACA accredited and have each employee be a member.
- b) Have camp leaders attend 2 continuing education workshops annually.

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) By 2020 have it be well known, accepted, and celebrated that all GP Camps are uniquely and intentionally unplugged, ACA accredited, and nurturing communities.

Camps Action Plan

- Expand wilderness programs
- Maintain and improve our outdoor chapel and worship areas
- Expand the use of Pastor's Retreat Cabins
- Improve and expand outdoor facilities
- Making sidewalks and trails accessible and user friendly
- Creating Christian Leadership areas where all feel welcome and inspired to grow

3.) Great Plains Camps Extend Genuine Christian Hospitality and Community through: Going the extra mile to make people feel welcome by providing an extravagant welcome to a clean and safe environment on camp. Extending God's grace and love to all including guests, staff, volunteers, and youth.

This is how we extend genuine Christian Hospitality.

- a) Look professional, have name tags, and be present when people are on site.
- b) Check on them frequently. Ask, "How is your stay at Camp _____? Is there anything I can do to make your camp experience even better?"
- c) Meet ACA standards and operate at ACA standards. Make sure the camp looks clean, smells clean, up to date and in working order. We only have one opportunity to make a first impression.

Measurable Outcomes:

- a) Camp evaluations done at all camps.
- b) Staff evaluations to be done 2 times per year for all staff
- c) Increase number of returning campers

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) Increase positive evaluations to 98%
- b) Have a positive, intentional and servant leadership team at each camp
- c) Reach a retention rate of 80%

Camp Action Plan

- Develop ownership through financial and volunteer programs for site council
- Extend "Camp Sunday" talks to UMC and non-UMC churches in local areas
- Encourage local agencies to utilize camp sites for events and retreats
- Encourage the use of camp sites by the local ecumenical groups
- Encourage area schools to utilize the camp sites for outdoor education
- Develop partnerships with Eagle Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, MDA, and other agencies
- Develop niche camping
- Adding program options such as Labyrinth, nature study, devotions, and curriculum

4.) Great Plains Camps Nurture Christian Faith and Discipleship through:

Providing an intentional Christian community that supports personal relationship w/ Christ.

This is how we Nurture Christian Faith and Discipleship.

- a) Invite others to share their “stories” testimonies.
- b) Having intentional quiet spaces in unique outdoor settings where you can listen to the “small, still voice”.
- c) Teach others how to pray.

Measurable Outcomes:

- a) Each camp partnered with at least 1 area church reaching out and helping support a need in the community that only camp can fulfill by 2016.

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) Planned and intentional follow-up on counselors and campers
- b) Church Camp Sundays at every church with guest speakers at the church that are either campers, campers' parents, or camp staff.
- c) Have at least 1 group from every Great Plains United Methodist Church and/or agency using one of the GP Camps.

Camp Action Plan

- Foster better relations with local pastors and congregations by hosting church potlucks at the individual camps with activities provided.
- Encourage local UMC pastors to participate in camp community
- Develop a Christian-based family event for the area community
- Encourage mission groups and/or trips to and/or from the Great Plains camps.
- Develop retreats for Sunday school teachers and pastors
- Develop a camp champion for each area church

5.) Great Plains Camps Teach Creation Care and Appreciation through:

Purposeful stewardship of God's resources and teach why stewardship is important.

This is how we teach creation care and appreciation:

- a) Having intentional quiet spaces in unique outdoor settings where you can listen to the "small, still voice".
- b) Teaching others to respect and protect our environment

Measurable Outcomes:

- a) Displaying green energy practices at all the GP camps.
- b) All GP camps having a partnership with university or other agencies to teach creation care.

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) Each GP camp have some sort of renewable energy on camp that they can use to teach about conservation.
- b) Each GP camp have a community garden to use to teach about creation care and appreciation.

Camp Action Plan

- Address our slope areas where there is erosion
- Develop a community garden at each camp
- Expand Outdoor Education programs
- Expand live animal programs
- Partner with Kansas and Nebraska Wildlife and Parks for expanded stewardship programming
- Encouraged to practice "leave no trace"
- To practice reuse, reduce, recycle
- Proper management of our natural resources including but not limited to forest, plains and waterfronts

6.) Great Plains Camps collaborate with United Methodist Churches and Agencies through: Communicate/educate and become a resource for other United Methodist Churches and United Methodist agencies. Also reach out to other agencies who the camp can serve as a host sited for educational or recreational purposes.

This is how we collaborate with UM churches/agencies and other agencies.

- a) Reach out to all ministry areas in the Great Plains. Starting with Congregational Excellence and then expanding.
- b) Provide a unique safe and sacred natural venue for meetings and workshops.
- c) Internship programs

Measurable Outcomes:

- a) Increase UM users groups by 5 new UM groups at each camp and sustain the groups for consecutive years.
- b) All GP camps have a health working relationship with all non-profit agencies in the immediate community that the camp is in.

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) Have at least 1 group from every Great Plains United Methodist Church and/or agency using one of the GP camps.

Camp Action Plan

- Establish programming partnerships with the congregational excellence team and other conference ministries
- Partner with the local UMC churches to provide or assist in programing for churches or youth groups
- Seek partnerships with local college campus ministries
- Pair camp counselors at the end of summer with churches in their college/university area by creating a mentor program

7.) Great Plains Camps Inspire Guests to do Love and Justice: Model the behavior ourselves. Equip through programing and providing learning opportunities.

This is how we inspire guests to do Love and Justice.

- a) Treating everyone with respect
- b) Sense of community – promoting who we are/visible show how love and justice looks/role modeling.

Measurable Outcomes:

- a) Intentional programing that teaches us love
- b) Activate love by doing justice to change lives

God Sized Difference: 2020

- a) Have an active holiday camp, school program, and outreach program
- b) “Do all the good you can for as long as ever you can” John Wesley

Camp Action Plan

- Cultivate cultural exchange between campers
- Develop a camper to counselor program outside of the summer camp season much like Big Brother, Big Sister
- Empower and encourage past summer camp counselors to get involved in local UM youth church programs
- Develop an educational event highlighting the need for love and justice in our area