

A History of Sugar Creek Bible Camp



Sugar Creek Bible Camp was incorporated in 1966 thanks to the vision of a small group of lay and clergy leaders from 33 congregations, led by Pastor Andrew Hegre of Utica and Mt. Sterling Lutheran churches, who were persistent in their idea for the founding of a Bible camp in the La Crosse area. Two separate farms were eventually purchased/donated to comprise the initial property. Additional parcels were later added bringing the acreage up to 635.

Summer camp programs began in the summer of 1969. Lutheran churches in the La Crosse, Viroqua and Dodgeville Conferences helped develop, build and support the camp. Early programs were very rustic in nature but enjoyed tremendously by youth and adults alike. In 1974 the program opportunities expanded when a retreat center was built, which allowed for year-round ministry. That center included administrative offices, a first aid infirmary, kitchen and dining facilities, sleeping for 20, a fireplace lounge area, multi-purpose room, and rest rooms with showers. During the 1980s a sauna, covered bridge, camper cabins (some with heating capabilities for year-round use), a shower house and a 30x70' picnic shelter, were added as summer camp participation grew to 550 per year.

As increasing numbers of youth, adults and families discovered the beauty of the Sugar Creek Valley and the joy of Christian renewal experiences to be had there, a definite need for expanded facilities arose. By 1993, participation had increased to more than 2000 between summer camp and fall/winter activities. A capital campaign was launched to raise funds with the purpose of expanding facilities for both year-round and summer camping ministries. Within the next 5 years, a new shower house, the Koinonia Lodge (which houses up to 40), two cabins, maintenance building, nature center and staff residences were completed. Participation continued to increase and by the year 2000, summer participation had grown to 3,000 (between on-site camping and off-site day camps) and retreat participation had grown to between 2,000 to 3,000 per year.

During the 2000s the camp had gone under another expansion/growth period and a capital campaign to finance it. A new swimming pool and shower house were completed, as well as a duplex-style staff residence and 4 beautiful, new, winterized, Amish-style cabins, an addition to the Retreat Center, moved Seeker cabins and built Frontier Town, Maintenance storage shed, new horse barn and new dining lodge (the "Manna Center"). Throughout the past 30 years of growth, one feature has remained constant: the proclamation of the Gospel to all who participate in Sugar Creek's ministry, that they might return to their congregations and homes renewed and strengthened for Christian living.