

# Gila Christian Ranch

“Saving Souls, Strengthening Saints, Reviving Families”

## Policies and Practices

### PREFACE

In case of apparent conflict with any other statement of policies and practices, the latest revision of this document takes precedence. Changes and additions are expected and are implemented at the discretion of the Ranch Manager. Updates to this document are subject to approval by the Board of Directors at regularly scheduled Directors’ meetings.

### INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended for those planning or administering ministry functions at Gila Christian Ranch. These leaders shall apply and communicate the principles and practices herein to other staff and to guests as appropriate.

In order to satisfy our biblical convictions and to conduct operations without offense or ill appearance to the fundamental, bible-believing community, policies and procedures of a clearly conservative nature will be maintained. It is our belief that careful attention to these policies and practices will promote the best environment for safe, orderly, and effective ministry.

Visitors and staff at Gila Christian Ranch shall respect and abide by the standards and practices of this document. Depending on the seriousness of violation, those dishonoring the principles and practices of this ministry will be subject to one or more of the following: verbal correction, verbal or written warning, removal of specified guest privileges or staff responsibilities, dismissal from the premises, or suspension of future rights to attend or minister. Those violating Gila Christian Ranch rules and standards such that early dismissal from the premises is necessary will not be reimbursed for camp fees or related expenses, full or partial.

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I. Local Church Support

Although founded and directed by the Rhodes family, Gila Christian Ranch recognizes the biblical principle of local church accountability and is organized as an extension ministry of Calvary Baptist Church in Silver City, New Mexico. It is our desire to be of service and encouragement to other local churches of like faith and practice to the largest extent possible. Maintenance of the following practices facilitates this objective:

1. Guests shall identify their home church. Spiritual decisions made at Gila Christian Ranch will be referred to the local church for follow-up assistance.
2. Guests will be encouraged to labor and serve under the cognizance of their local church.
3. Preachers at Gila Christian Ranch will normally be men with local church pastoral experience, or men preparing for missions and/or pastoral ministry.
4. Our facility is available for use by local church groups and ministries (see section VIII for details).
5. As opportunity affords, a Gila Christian Ranch representative is available to present this ministry to other local churches of like faith and practice. Displays, presentations and speaking engagements can be scheduled during church services, church youth conferences, church seminars, etc.

## II. Guidelines for Counselors and Staff

Retention of this ministry's basic mission and character depends upon proper selection and administration of seasonal and permanent staff. Prayer, spiritual discernment, and skill must be employed in this selection and management process. The following is required of all staff members:

### 1. General

- They shall accept and support the Doctrinal Statement and the Policies and Practices of Gila Christian Ranch.
- They shall satisfy applicable biblical qualifications, evidence general Christian maturity, and possess necessary job skills.
- They shall become familiar with Gila Christian Ranch rules and traditions. Questions and constructive suggestions should be discussed with the ranch manager.
- They should be willing to give of themselves beyond the call of duty, when necessary.
- Staff (as well as guests) may not leave the grounds without permission of the program or ranch manager.

### 2. Staff Assignments

- All staff assignments must approved by the Ranch Manager.
- Staff selection and placement will be strongly guided by the ministry's need and by the abilities/talents of individual volunteers. Every effort will be made to obtain an appropriate number of workers. (We seek neither too few nor too many). Counselors shall have previously demonstrated Christian maturity and service and be recommended by their local church pastor. Teen Camp counselors shall be college age or older (bible college students are preferred).
- During youth weeks, a church may send one or two adults as "sponsors" with its group. Sponsors provide backup supervision for the church group and are available in case of emergency or should a child from the church group need to be sent home early. Sponsors shall assist Gila Christian Ranch counselors as needed, but are not considered regular staff.
- The Ranch has no paid employees. Staff members must raise their own financial support.
- Ministry related expenses will normally be reimbursed (or paid in advance) by Gila Christian Ranch. Staff should obtain advance approval for expenses if reimbursement is desired.
- Volunteers working fulltime (a minimum of 32 hours) during a program week will not be subject to program fees. Part-time workers may be allowed substantial discounts against advertised program costs, as deemed appropriate by the Ranch Manager. Housing for part-time workers, however, is offered on an as-available basis. Part-time workers may need to bring their own tent or other accommodation.

### 3. Assistant Counselors

- must be at least 15 years old. (Service is usually limited to Junior Week.)
- should have a clear salvation profession and obvious commitment to Christ.
- should be faithful in church attendance and service.
- must demonstrate maturity in working with younger children.
- must be recommended by the Youth leader and/or Pastor.
- will be assigned to a cabin and team
- must have flexible hours of availability and assist the Lead Counselor whenever needed.
- should be prepared with at least one bedtime devotional for the program week.
- should be available to counsel after services.
- will take turns overseeing and supervising the bathhouse during busy shower times (freeing the Lead Counselor to be at the cabin with remaining campers).
- should be prepared to run activities as needed.
- shall assume leadership and helping roles as requested by the Program or Ranch Manager.

### 4. Lead Counselors

In addition to having satisfied the assistant counselor guidelines above, and requirements expressed elsewhere in this Poli-

cies and Practices Manual, Lead Counselors:

- shall welcome campers as they arrive at camp and shall help them feel at home.
- shall know the location of each of their campers at all times.
- are responsible for the total well-being of each camper in their charge, including their spiritual development.
- shall insure they and their campers attend all chapels and services.
- are required to stay in their cabins/teepees/tents after lights out, with their assigned campers, except for emergency situations. Lights and noise are not permitted during sleeping hours.
- shall help their campers plan group activities, when applicable, and will supervise these activities.
- shall make time to counsel and minister to each camper in their care, individually.
- shall promptly report symptoms of ill health to the first-aid supervisor.
- will be prompt with their group to all activities.
- shall assume leadership and helping roles as requested by the program or ranch manager.
- shall lead their campers in a bedtime devotional each night.
- shall keep a written record of each camper's progress.
- shall keep in mind that, except for scheduled breaks, their job is 24 hours a day.
- shall supervise final cleanup and help prevent camper possessions from being left behind.
- shall complete written records and evaluations for follow-up.
- Teen Week Lead Counselors shall be High School graduates. One or more subsequent years of Bible College, or equivalent personal study and church involvement, is also preferred.

### III. Bible Translations

We believe the old King James is the best and most respected English-speaking translation. All staff and guest speakers shall use this bible (only) for ministry at Gila Christian Ranch. Guests are encouraged to use the KJV, as well.

### IV. Attire

This issue involves difficulty and subjectivity; nonetheless, Christian organizations like ours find the maintenance of clothing standards necessary. In order to avoid an offense or stumbling block (I Cor. 8:13, 10:32), to prevent distractions from ministry and to promote expressly Christian manners and appearances, the following practices will be maintained:

- Clothing with unchristian writing or pictures is excluded
- Shorts are not permitted
- Attire for girls/ladies includes dresses, skirts, or culottes (knee length or longer). Clothing such as tight fitting tops, crop tops, slits above the knee, etc, are excluded.
- Apparel is subject to various fads and sometimes exhibits offensive or immodest appearances with respect to traditional styles and values. Any apparel of questionable appearance should not be worn.

### V. Music

Music is a powerful tool of ministry whose use must be carefully managed. Music standards involve subjective judgement and much discernment. Gila Christian Ranch believes that traditional church standards and practices should be maintained. To minimize controversy and the possibility of embarrassing or offensive situations, the following rules govern:

- Old hymns and spiritual music having passed the test of time are preferred. Occasionally, recently composed selections will be allowed, subject to the approval criteria herein.
- Congregational singing shall use the hymnbooks provided by the facility. Special music selections will be approved in advance by an appropriate staff member.
- Except in rare circumstances approved by the ranch manager, pre-recorded sound tracks for background accompaniment are not allowed.
- Unacceptable styles of music include those having strong beats, off-beats, repetitive chants, pronounced sliding of the voice, unbiblical lyrics, or any manners or forms which attract attention to the musician rather than our Lord.
- It has become customary to applaud sacred music artists. We discourage this practice at Gila Christian Ranch. Vocalizing traditional, God-honoring expressions (such as "Amen", "Praise the Lord", etc) is encouraged.

### VI. Prohibited Items

In order to maintain a safe, Christian atmosphere, to remove distractions and create the most effective context for ministry of the Holy Spirit, the following items are not allowed: TVs, Radios, CD or tape players, walkmans, Gameboys, facial jewelry (except for earrings on ladies), weapons of any kind (except during special hunting programs), reading material which conflicts with Christian principles, alcohol, tobacco products, and any other items our staff might deem improper, offensive, or distracting to our goals. Vehicles are not permitted for recreational purposes but are allowed for essential transporta-

tion. ATVs are used by staff only and are also permitted as an aid to workers during work days/weeks.

Restrictions on attire are addressed in Section IV. Other restrictions may apply during specialized sessions of ministry according to the scope of ministry and the requests or convictions of attending groups.

## VII. Behavior and Attitudes

Conscious effort should be made by staff and guests to conform to biblical models of behavior and attitude. Guests shall maintain cooperative manners and shall comply with facility rules and with staff instructions. Youth are encouraged to treat staff members with titles of respect e.g. "Mr.", "Mrs.", and "Miss". Verbal or physical abuse, flagrant displays of unchristian attitudes, pranks, and other forms of mistreatment or misbehavior will not be tolerated and shall be corrected and/or reported promptly.

## VIII. Travel On and Off the Ranch Property

### A. Vehicular Use at the Ranch

1. Vehicles are allowed for essential transportation only. Recreational use is normally prohibited. Exceptions must be individually approved by the Ranch Manager.
2. Vehicles (cars, trucks, ATVs, motorcycles, construction vehicles, etc.) will travel on established roadways only, except when directed otherwise for hauling essential materials, supplies or personnel to/from construction or activity sites.
3. Ranch vehicles will be driven by staff personnel only. Vehicles brought to the ranch by guests shall be driven by the owner or responsible party only.

### B. Travel off Ranch Property

Adjoining property and roadways include both public and private lands. Guests of GCR shall remain on Ranch property unless specifically approved by the Program Director or Ranch Manager. Excursions off GCR property shall:

1. keep to public lands and roads;
2. respect the peace and quiet and exercise care not to damage fragile environment;
3. not engage in behavior which may adversely impact the testimony of GCR with its neighbors.

While Gila Christian Ranch is not responsible for guests who decide to visit adjoining lands before or after their stay at the Ranch we, nonetheless, reserve the right to deny facility or program access to any individual whose behavior may adversely impact our rural neighbors and/or the testimony of GCR in any manner.

## IX. Use of Facility by Outside Groups

Gila Christian Ranch desires to staff its facility and administer various programs throughout the year. Open weeks are often available, however, and outings can be scheduled by church groups of like faith and practice. The leadership of these groups (pastor, visiting speakers, counselors, etc.) shall agree to support the policies and practices of Gila Christian Ranch as expressed herein. Additionally, use of the facility is subject to the governing, on-site presence of a regular Gila Christian Ranch staff member.

Before departure, cleaning and repair shall be performed as necessary in order to return the facility to the same (or better) condition than it was when received.

## IX. Prevention of Child and Sexual Abuse

As our society has drifted from biblical and Christian moorings, the incidence of child and sexual abuse has increased. Likewise, reports and allegations of abuse have increased. It is important for Gila Christian Ranch to

1. provide a safe, secure environment for women and children (the most common victims) and
2. protect our staff against false accusations.

The following practices will be followed:

1. No one with a criminal record for sexual misconduct or child abuse will be knowingly used as a staff counselor or in any other capacity where intimate and/or close private contact with children or the opposite sex is possible.
2. No one with an observed tendency towards physical, sexual, or emotional abuse will be used as a staff counselor or in any similar functional capacity where intimate or close private contact with others is possible.
3. A child shall not be struck.
4. Physical contact of children shall be limited to hands, arms, shoulders and above, except that, in the immediate pres-

- ence of other adults and/or staff, small children may be carried or lifted in an appropriate manner, when necessary.
5. Situations shall be avoided where a staff member or guest is alone with a child and out of public sight.
  6. Staff shall conduct periodic checks of buildings, bathrooms, and play areas when children are on the premises.
  7. Children shall not be left alone and/or without supervision.
  8. Male workers may escort children to a bathroom door but must not enter alone with any child.
  9. Staff shall not counsel a member of the opposite sex unless a staff member of the opposite sex is also present (or a door is left open to an adjacent area where a staff member or adult of the opposite sex is also present).
  10. Workers shall plan and make all reasonable efforts to insure they are not in a situation where, due to inadequate staffing, communication failure, etc., they are unable to fully comply with these rules and procedures.

## X. Safety

The continual safety of staff and guests shall be an important part of planning and general administration. Activities associated with high risks of injury shall be avoided, e.g. high or difficult climbing, reckless or unsupervised horsemanship, speeding, attempting to catch wild game or poisonous snakes and insects (hunting retreats excepted), excessive horseplay, etc. Guests or staff failing to observe written or oral safety instructions will be excluded from specified activities and may be subject to disciplinary actions up to, and including, dismissal from the facility.

## XI. Gifts of Time and Money

Gila Christian Ranch is critically dependent on volunteer help for continued and effective ministry. Workers are normally compensated for ministry-related expenses and speakers are given honorariums (see section II for additional information.). Also, under circumstances when specialized services are unavailable on a charitable or volunteer basis, paid work may be contracted for facility construction or maintenance. At least until the work has substantially grown, however, the ministry will have no paid employees.

Income through program fees does not meet ministry expenses; consequently, financial giving to Gila Christian Ranch (tax deductible) is essential to its survival.

Gila Christian Ranch will regularly communicate its needs but will not make direct, personal appeals for gifts of time or money. We prefer to take our personal appeals to our Heavenly Father, whom we trust to touch hearts and make provision for the prosperity of His work.

## XII. Roles for Youth Counselors and Sponsors

Questions sometimes arise concerning our view of Counselor versus Sponsor (or Chaperone) roles and responsibilities. The following is presented to help understanding:

### **Sponsors and Chaperones**

Churches may desire to send their youth pastor or youth leader with their church group. This is welcomed, although administrative and housing challenges normally limit this to one couple per church group (more for large groups). Arrangements for Sponsors must be accomplished no later than the deadline for early registration noted in the camp brochure.

*Note: Should qualified adults from a sending church wish to apply for a camp staff position during the week of their church's attendance, they will be considered for positions based upon their qualifications and the availability of openings. Should they be approved, they will serve the entire camp and report directly to camp management. In this staff role, there is no charge for their stay at camp.*

Our understanding of those fulfilling a church sponsor (or chaperone) role during a program week is as follows:

- The local church is responsible to insure their Sponsor's spiritual character, behavior, and leadership qualifications meet or exceed camp expectations.
- The Sponsor's first priority is the spiritual and physical welfare of their local church group.
- The Sponsor shall show honor and respect for Gila Christian Ranch staff.
- The Sponsor shall insure their group's support of the camp program, and this ministry's policies and practices.
- The Sponsor shall be available to take any of their campers home early, should it be necessary for medical, emotional, or disciplinary reasons.
- The Sponsor shall be available at all times to provide counseling to any of their young people, as needed. They shall share information with the Lead Counselor, as appropriate, to facilitate prayer and loving, effective ministry.
- The Lead Counselor devotes much energy to maintaining order and to a smooth program execution, while the Sponsor avoids distractions and focuses exclusively on ministering to individual needs within his church group.
- The Sponsor shall attend the daily Counselors' meeting where needs and decisions are shared and prayed for.
- Sponsors are housed separately and their housing normally offers more amenities. (Accommodations vary and are assigned at the discretion of the camp.) It is expected that Sponsors will take advantage of their private housing arrange-

ments to rest well each night. It is important they be alert and effective for ministry during program hours the entire week.

- The Counselor is ultimately responsible for his cabin/teepee. However, he and the Sponsor conscientiously work together to accomplish the goals of the local church and its pastor. The Counselor will be an advocate for the goals and convictions of the local church groups he ministers to, reinforcing the message and training the Sponsor represents.
- Sponsors shall pay the same program fees as those of attending youth.

Can a Sponsor serve as Lead Counselor?

A Sponsor might qualify for the Counselor position, but the two positions are meant to complement each other, not be mutually-exclusive.

The difficulties a Sponsor has in fulfilling the Counselor role are as follows:

- He (or she) must be fully dedicated to the cabin or teepee group. If his home church group is larger than the number assigned to his cabin/teepee, he will not have time to minister to those outside of his assigned group. If his church group is small (less than 7 boys or 7 girls), he must accept campers from other churches who become part of his group assignment and he shall give them equal attention.
- He must maintain his energy level throughout the week, despite short nights and long days. Older Counselors may be unable to keep pace.
- He must fulfill all the requirements listed for Counselors and arrive at camp early for meetings and training. He shall demonstrate firm loyalty to the camp management and its program goals. Some sponsors would not be fully committed to accepting these Counselor responsibilities.
- Sponsors may have a diminished sense of accountability to the camp. If so, they put fulfillment of spiritual goals, administrative order, and safety practices at risk.
- The Sponsor-turned-Counselor must thoroughly acquaint himself with the camp, its procedures and practices. A volunteer who expects to drop in and out of camp one week of one year may be inadequately prepared for effective, safe ministry.
- He must maintain order and discipline and help administer the program. He will have more demands on his time and be less able to minister to individual needs than the Sponsor.

Although he still retains ultimate responsibility for the ship, the Master Captain of an ocean liner turns over control of the helm to a Harbor Master when he enters a busy seaport. Likewise, the wise church group sponsor allows the Lead Counselor to lead the camp ministry for his cabin. This enables the Counselor to safely, smoothly, and knowledgeably execute the camp program in pursuit of mutual spiritual goals, while the Sponsor is free to attend the personal needs of his church group.