

Trinity Pines: A Place to “Pause” for Learning

By Jonathan Brooks

Our Western culture is overwhelmed with fast-paced, high-tech solutions for everything, including leadership development. In light of that, a more slow-paced, low-tech approach to training leaders may be more relevant than ever. The Trinity Pines Conference Center, located 80 miles north of Houston on the shores of Lake Livingston, offers just such an approach.



“Technology has accelerated our lives. Life gets faster; we get faster; ministry gets faster. We may try to cram in a leadership training session on a Thursday night at our church. The reality is that we *need* to set apart time in our lives to get away. There is something about getting away and slowing down from our fast-paced culture. We need to hit the ‘Pause’ button for the purpose of listening, learning, and training. Now more than ever, retreat ministry is needed,” emphasized Phil Springer, Trinity Pines Director.

Sleeping accommodations. Dining hall. Conference rooms. Campfire sites. Recreation fields. RV sites. Low and high ropes courses. Swimming pool. Canoeing. Prayer Garden. Amphitheater. Trinity Pines has everything needed for such a “Pause”.



“Trinity Pines offers a great place to get away from the competing voices and demands of everyday life,” said Jerry Edmonson, Lead Pastor of The Fellowship at Cinco Ranch. “I have been going to Trinity Pines for eight years and have seen it evolve into a first-class retreat center. We have used a lot of different camps for our annual elders’ retreat; after using Trinity Pines, our elders wanted to go back.”

Campo Londoño, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Horeb, echoed Edmonson’s remarks. “Trinity Pines is a place where

one can withdraw from the busyness of the city and everyday life and concentrate on listening and learning.”

According to Springer, the staff of Trinity Pines participates and helps lead based on the need of each group. In most cases, they serve as service providers, such as meals, sleeping accommodations, and low ropes course instruction.

Trinity Pines has hosted Union Baptist Association (UBA) leadership retreats and conferences; numerous church leadership and staff retreats; pastors’ conferences for the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), Southern Baptists of Texas

Convention and other denominations; volunteer mission training; Mission Service Corp training; Great Commission Initiative training; and children and youth summer camps. They have even had a few sister camps bring their staff to Trinity Pines for staff training.



One of the most frequently used tools at Trinity Pines is the low ropes course, which is a training course made of cables attached to trees just a few feet off the ground. According to Springer, the low ropes course provides experiential learning through solving real problems.

"Groups can accomplish more in three to four hours outside on a low ropes course than they can in three to four days in a classroom environment," said Springer.

Edmonson noted that during their recent elders' retreat, the low ropes course was one of their most meaningful exercises. "For most of our elders, this was their first experience with a low ropes course. The exercises the staff of Trinity Pines guided us through opened our eyes to teamwork and some basic leadership principles as well. We want all of our new elders to have this experience."

For the past three years, Trinity Pines has hosted *Missions in the Pines*. The event was inspired by *World Changers*, week-long service-oriented mission trips for students sponsored by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Since *World Changers* focuses on serving mid-size towns and does not offer service opportunities for small towns, Trinity Pines decided to host the *Missions in the Pines* in an effort to impact its local community.

This summer Trinity Pines hosted 120 students from Houston, Waco, and local churches who participated in everything from backyard Bible clubs to construction projects. Each project was located within 30 minutes of the Trinity Pines campus.

"*Missions in the Pines* is the most exciting thing we do all summer!" exclaimed Springer. "Students come to camp to join others for the opportunity to serve. What they are really learning about is servant leadership. We add fun elements to the experience, but students do work hard. Students are also the speakers during the nightly worship services. Student speakers are selected to share what they encountered and learned during the day while serving. I am blown away by the insight and depth of what students have shared!"



Springer also shared that Trinity Pines is unique in that they have intentionally reached out to non-Anglo churches and have worked hard to help all people groups feel welcome. "We prayed that God would help us have more diversity in the make-up of groups who use our facilities. We asked God to show us how to do that."

Currently, only about 35% of groups who use Trinity Pines are Anglo.



Londoño, who also serves as the UBA's Hispanic Ministry Consultant, is one of the non-Anglo crowd who have utilized Trinity Pines for leadership training. He has participated in and lead numerous pastors' retreats, *Líderis Transformadores* (leadership training) retreats, church retreats, youth retreats, and couples retreats.

"Without Trinity Pines all Houston area churches would lack a very crucial leadership development resource," he added.

For information about how Trinity Pines can be the place of "Pause" for your next leadership training event, call 1-800-672-7079, email them at office@trinitypines.org, or visit their website www.trinitypines.org.