

**By Katie Moore**

## **Next Step Christian Church, Boulder, CO**

### **Camp Paul Hummel—Camp Coordinator**

“Wouldn’t this make a great church camp?” Mary asked her father, Paul. Eight-year-old Mary and her father had walked up the mountainside and came across a beautiful ranch in the foothills of Boulder, Colorado. Several years later Paul read the property was for sale in order to pay for the owner’s funeral expenses and unpaid taxes at the courthouse. This was during the Depression, money was scarce, and Paul was the only one who showed up at the auction. Paul Hummel was now the owner of 240 acres of land which he desired to use as a camp for the youth of the Boulder and Denver Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) churches.



Fast forward twenty years: It was the early 1960’s—JFK was president; the Vietnam War had just begun; the Denver Broncos defeated the Boston Patriots 13-10 in the first American Football League game—and Paul was backing his cattle truck into the Denver SDB parking lot. Along with the help of other staff, Paul stacked mattresses into the back of his truck (very cautiously, I’m sure) and placed a group of young adults atop the mattresses (very safely, of course) for the drive up the long winding mountain road to his ranch for summer camp. Gene Davis was one of the campers waiting in the parking lot of the Denver church and vividly recalls the long winding journey up the dirt road and shared memories of “new camper” initiations. New campers had to ride on the side of the truck bed closest to the steep drop of the mountainside, their faces filling with terror as the truck twisted around “windy point” ...!

For over 60 years, Camp Paul Hummel (CPH) has continued the legacy of Paul Hummel. It has been a place of refuge, crazy fun, and ministry to thousands of children through its camp program. CPH hums with history, camp memories, and ridiculous stories. However, more tangible than the comforting weight of its campy heritage is experiencing the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is alive and well at CPH. (I'm convinced that CPH is the Lord's summer home!) CPH has been, and continues to be, a sanctuary, a place of peace, an opportunity to take a breath and simply soak in Jesus. Campers can detach from the distraction of technology and the pressures of their lives. Camp is unhurried, there is time to ponder, and there is relaxation and renewal. But, what is it that makes CPH so special for hundreds of campers and staff decade after decade? The FOOD! The food is why camp means so much to so many! Sing along with me, "We want to thank the cook (bang, bang), we want to thank the cook (bang, bang)...!" I tease, but the food at camp really is part of the experience. We have favorite camp meals we make year after year and grin as campers devour their strawberry pretzel salad. Aside from camp food, there is so much to experience. It is commonly campers' first time away from home for an extended period of time and is a perfect opportunity to try new things outside of comfort zones. At CPH campers get to try out archery, swimming, moonlight hikes, chores (yes, this is part of the experience!), stargazing with the CPH Astronomy Club, getting dressed up for banquet night, and of course the hilarious campfire games!



Another aspect of camp that is special to so many is the staff. The directors, nurses, cooks, counselors, and numerous other roles that make camp happen are amazing people. Campers usually find a favorite counselor and many times their interactions are life changing. Our camp staff is a safe place to ask questions, offer a listening ear, and, when appropriate, offer Spirit-led advice. For some campers, camp is the only outlet they have for this type of experience—one of

the few and precious opportunities they have to learn about God's love for them. How honored are we to be able to provide this opportunity?!

Camp is also a place to create lifelong friendships. Campers quickly make new "camp friends" and get to know old friends in a new context. A unique trait of CPH is our relationship with the North Loup SDB Church in Nebraska. We coordinate our camps through our Association and the campers get the opportunity to meet and reconnect with other campers from Nebraska. The community between our SDB churches is special and something that campers from both states look forward to each summer.

Camp Paul Hummel is a place where many kids first experience God and learn about the love of our Savior. Jesus always shows up at camp! It is a place where believers can ask difficult questions of, and grow closer to, God. Camp is a place of miracles as campers who have lost their faith come running back to the arms of Jesus.

At the end of the week, many campers (and staff) find themselves plotting ways to extend their stay. However, we all eventually have to go back down the mountain to reality... and start planning for next camp season.

If you would like to join us at camp for 2020, our Junior Camp (grades 3-6) is June 21-26 and our Intermediate/Senior Camp (grades 7-12) is July 5-12. Registration opens in March at [nextstepchurch.org/camp](http://nextstepchurch.org/camp). If you are interested in serving at CPH 2020 or have any questions, please contact Katie Moore at [cphcoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:cphcoordinator@gmail.com)

Camp Paul Hummel overlooks the beautiful Boulder valley and most of Denver. Campers are going to have the time of their lives as they build relationships with each other and the Lord at camp. Activities include hiking, swimming, recreation, campfire games, Bible study, worship, archery, and crafts. Campers build relationships with each other that will last a lifetime as they grow together during the week. Camps are for children entering grades 3 through 12. Each camp lasts approximately one week.