

# Quick and Effective Keys to Successful Retreats

## START PLANNING EARLY!

We recommend making reservations between nine months and one year in advance. Involve some of the proposed participants in setting goals and planning activities. Youth, families, officers, teachers, singles, couples, etc. know their own needs and can be your best recruiters. Select your first, second, and perhaps third choice of dates and then check on availability.

## IDENTIFY YOUR PURPOSE

What issues or subjects will be addressed during the retreat? What will be gained by attending the retreat? Will this be a retreat just for fun, or is there a special intention you have in mind?

## PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Make sure planned activities fit the purpose. If time for personal reflection is needed, schedule accordingly. If improving cooperation and communication are objectives, you may want to arrange some time on our challenge course.

## KNOWING THE FACILITIES

Visit the site with some of the planning team. The setting will suggest many ideas. Our Director will be happy to give you a tour and brainstorm program ideas with you.

## EXPECTATIONS

Set a realistic goal for number of participants.

## BUDGETING

Budget carefully. Your budget should include such items as:

- Overnight cost, food, and other services.
- Honorarium, expenses for outside leadership and program supplies.
- Give-a-ways. (Some groups give special caps, bandannas, or tee shirts as mementos of the retreat.)
- Add 10% for unexpected expenses or for seed money for the next retreat.
- Set fees accordingly.
- Determine and communicate your policies about refunds and cancellations.
- Determine your policy about scholarships and where that money might come from.

## RESOURCES

Start gathering resources early and continue right up to the event. There will likely be surprises during the retreat so plan to be flexible but don't lose sight of the goals.

## CREATIVITY

Be creative with your programs but maintain some traditions which are meaningful to all participants.

## BE FLEXIBLE

Even the best planned retreats can be thrown off course by a number of variables. For this reason it is very important to remain flexible in schedule, mind, and spirit. Having some rainy day activities in mind can also be your best friend!

## PROMOTION

Promote the event by direct communication with the people who will benefit from attending.

### Well in advance:

- Line up people to call and invite potential participants.
- Hand out and mail out invitations with application forms.
- Recruit marginal members or non-members to draw them into the full life of the church.
- Prepare a fun promotional skit for an assembly, church supper, or worship.
- Announce the retreat each Sunday until all spaces are full.
- Do not cancel because of low registrations. Have the retreat with the "remnant" and make sure they have the time of their lives. They will come back so excited everyone will wish they had been there.

## EVALUATION

Prepare an evaluation process. How well were goals met? What was especially meaningful? What could be done better next time? Start planning for the next retreat for this group, perhaps even make reservations before you leave. Dedicating the same weekend each year as "your retreat weekend" will help sustain and grow this tradition and soon people will work to keep that weekend open.