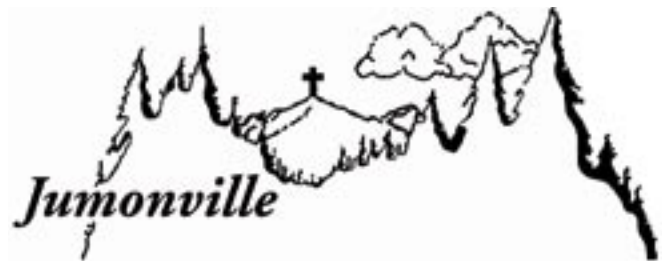
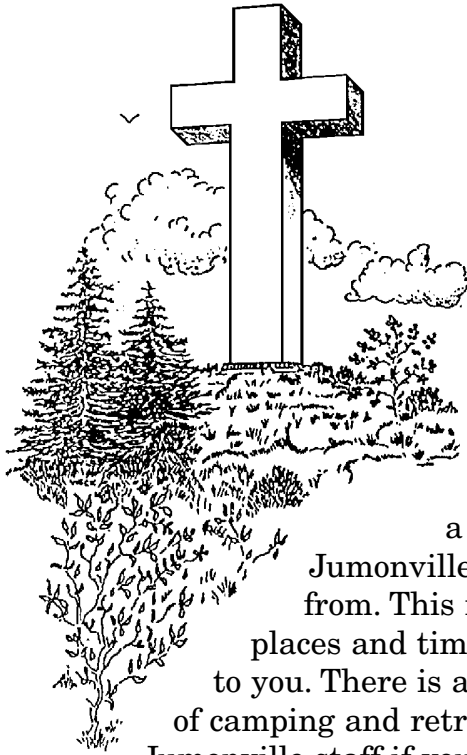


Retreat Planning Packet



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Planning Your Retreat...
One Step at a Time



Welcome to Your Retreat Planning Packet

It is my hope and prayer that this manual will be a help to you in planning your retreat whether it is here at Jumonville or at one of the other wonderful facilities you have to pick from. This manual is a collection of material from a wide variety of places and times. We have tried to adapt the material to be most useful to you. There is a gold mine of materials currently available in the area of camping and retreat planning. Don't hesitate to contact me or any of the Jumonville staff if you would like additional help with resources or other areas of help.

We have several other publications at Jumonville that may be helpful in your planning. We have a Dean's Manual and Information Pack (for week long summer camp use) and a Group Leader's Handbook (for retreat use). We also have our entire website on CD ROM (which is much quicker than waiting for web pages to download). We have also developed some materials particularly in the Adventure areas such as Challenge/Ropes Course Manuals and an Adventure Program Activities Resource Manual which includes areas such as rock climbing, whitewater, caving, canoeing, windsurfing, downhill and cross country skiing, etc...). We have had over 25 year's experience in the area of adventure programs.

Also, if you would like additional information on the use of our fine facilities at Jumonville, give us a call anytime. We'd love to help!

Happy Reading! Don't let anyone kid you, if you are in charge of planning a retreat, you have a big job on your hands. Don't take it lightly. Although the work load can be overwhelming at times, a great deal can be accomplished in a retreat setting. You have the opportunity to see lives changed and transformed. That's an exciting prospect.

May God bless you in your efforts as you share your gifts and talents that the Lord has provided. Remember, it is only by using what you have been given that you will receive more.

Sincerely,

Larry Beatty
President

You - the Retreat Coordinator

Retreat! The word is filled with emotions of excitement, adventure, relaxation and fun. But when “retreat” is coupled with “coordinator,” the very sound of it strikes panic into the hearts of grown men and women!

Unfortunately most retreat coordinators are “sweet talked” into their positions with tactics similar to these:

- It won't take much time - we've already picked the date.
- You won't have too much to do - you can delegate the work.
- We know you can do it. Here is all the information from last year. And here is a list of the troublemakers that we said couldn't come back.

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- You gotta do it. No one else will and it's just two weeks away.
- The LORD has led our committee to ask YOU to do the job.

No matter what the committee might say, retreat planning is hard work. Individuals who accept the responsibility must take the task seriously and plan to spend ample time on the project. A poorly planned and executed retreat is worse than no retreat at all.

Here is a guide to help you in planning your retreat. Just remember, no two retreats are exactly alike and everything in this packet may not apply to your situation.

Why a Retreat?

A good way to start answering that question is to ask “Who is this retreat for?”, “What are their needs, their wants, their interests?” Often we assume we know the needs and wants of a particular group of people and then set about designing a program or retreat to meet the needs we think they have. Make sure the individuals in your group are interested in what you are offering in a retreat. If they are not, it is very likely that attendance will not be good. Ask questions. Talk to the people in your group. Use evaluations or questionnaires from other events or retreats that will give you the answers to these questions. Try to think like the individuals in your group.

If you have planned a retreat before, and the results were successful, ask “Why was it successful?” or, “Why not?” Repeat your winners, but stay on top of current issues, trends and interest when you are deciding goals and purpose.

Very often, it can be a simple, but very worthwhile goal or purpose such as “Getting away in a beautiful

environment to spend some time with God;” “Reevaluate goals with family in a relaxed setting;” “Spiritual refreshment and inspiration.” For youth, it can be “a time of growing close to others in a group while having fun!” This is an excellent opportunity for counselors and leaders to demonstrate Christ’s love in a practical, everyday way. Or, your goals could be for a learning, educational experience combined with relaxation, refreshment and inspiration.

Many times, the things you want to accomplish at a retreat or conference cannot be accomplished at church or at home. **There is something about taking time away in an atmosphere that stimulates people to listen, rest, talk and refresh. This kind of experience can be therapeutic for tired bodies and frazzled nerves.** The retreat setting means getting away from the everyday routine, telephones, television, and having the opportunity for uninterrupted fellowship... These elements make a retreat a unique time for relaxation, inspiration, learning and just having fun with friends and family.

Your Own Notes

How to Choose a Retreat Facility?

It started out as a rather uneventful October Tuesday morning, and then a young woman walked into our camp office asking in which cabins her group of 45 would be staying. We were not expecting a retreat group that day!

I thought to myself, there must be a mistake. . . they are at the wrong camp. We frantically checked our reservation book and file. There was no booking and no contract!

It was 11 a.m., and the group of 45 waiting in our parking lot was expecting lunch!

How did this mix-up come about? The group had two leaders, and each had assumed the other had made arrangements with the camp. We hadn't heard from either one.

This nightmare of a situation points out the extreme importance of good pre-retreat communication between the group looking for a retreat facility and the potential camp or conference center.

It's a good idea for those responsible for planning a retreat or conference to make some decision about just what they are looking for in a facility before they start calling camps to check prices and availability.

Choose just one member of the group to be the contact person with a potential retreat facility. After making reservations, this person should be the group representative with the camp or conference center.

Begin by agreeing on a purpose for the retreat. A well-defined purpose will help set some parameters for the kind of facility you need. If you are doing a marriage enrichment weekend, nicer accommodations may be more important than lots of recreational opportunities.

A youth group wanting to spend a fun weekend together may put a high priority on what recreational facilities are available.

Several questions to be answered before calling a facility would be:

- What kind of accommodations do we want; motel type, dorm rooms, or "rustic" cabins with no plumbing and no heat?
- Do we want to cook for ourselves or have the meals provided? If we do our own cooking, is there an extra charge?
- Do we want bathrooms in the cabins or are outside showerhouses okay?
- Do we want a "tuna surprise" or "roast beef" quality evening meal?
- How much money do we want to spend, and more importantly, what is the group as a whole willing to spend? Your group, that was so enthusiastic about the super low price you got for them, may not be too enthusiastic about the sagging mattresses and the mystery meat sandwiches.

Just one suggestion about price. If you feel like your group would appreciate something just a little nicer, but several people wouldn't be able to afford it, go with what most people could afford. Then you can offer financial assistance to those needing it. Or you can charge your group a little less than the actual cost and ask several people who can afford it to help make up the difference.

Here are a few more questions to consider before you start calling camps:

- How large of a group can you **realistically** expect to have?
- How many meeting rooms will you need?
- Do you mind sharing a facility with other groups?
- When do you plan to arrive and depart?

How to Choose a Retreat Facility? (cont.)

Have several options on dates that would work for your group. This will save you time later should you find that the facility you want is already full on the weekend of your first choice. It is also a good practice to confirm dates for a site before you confirm dates with a speaker!

When comparing prices between retreat facilities, in addition to comparing the meeting and lodging facilities, make sure you ask what is and is not included in the basic fee.

- Is there an extra charge for use of meeting facilities?
- What recreational activities are available? Does use of certain recreational equipment or do some activities cost extra?
- Do you provide your own audio/visual equipment such as a VCR and TV or will the facility provide it? What is the charge for such service?
- Is a separate speaker's room available? Does it cost more than the normal facilities?
- Are linens available or do we bring our own bedding? If linens are provided, will the bed be made up by you or the camp staff? It is best to not make assumptions.
- Is coffee available for break times?
- What about campfires and communion elements?

You will have a better retreat experience if all of these details and questions are worked out before you arrive at the site - better yet, before you sign a contract.

You will want to have a written contract signed by your group representative and by the camp representative. This will further insure good pre-retreat communication and will get, in writing, agreed upon

arrangements.

A facility that is doing a good job in serving guest groups will require a contract and a non-refundable deposit, usually 10 to 15 percent of the minimum fee. Be sure you understand what additional cancellation charges there might be should you cancel after you have signed a contract.

Also, be sure that the minimum number of participants, and the corresponding minimum fee, is reasonably attainable. Take those contracts very seriously. Your church or organization board will take the matter very seriously if they have to make up the difference when you miss your minimum or they find themselves paying cancellation charges.

Another very important consideration in finding the right facility for your retreat is evaluating the camp or conference staff's attitude toward service and hospitality. What is their philosophy and service record in working with retreat groups?

One good indicator of a service-minded facility is that they should have staff available throughout your stay to answer questions and take care of needs you might have during your retreat. You will be happiest in the facility where the staff views serving retreat groups as an important part of their ministry, not just a way to fill beds and help pay the bills.

Talk to other groups and find out where they have received the best service. Whenever possible, make a visit to a potential site. Talking in person with a representative at the facility and seeing the buildings and grounds will answer a lot of questions that aren't so easily answered over the phone.

A visit to the facility will also

How to Choose a Retreat Facility? (cont.)

give you some insight into how a camp or retreat center feels about & serves its guests. If you find out they have “over sold” their facilities in a brochure or over the phone, there’s a good chance they might be “over selling” their service too.

I like the hotel advertisement with a caption under a picture of a beautifully prepared buffet table, which reads; “Much as we enjoy the more glamorous aspects of meeting preparation, we can be just as enthusiastic about getting you an extension cord.” Find the facility whose staff is as cheerful about getting you an extension cord as they are about preparing your statement.

The important element of service might be worth the cost of a few extra dollars for to insure that your group will have a quality retreat experience.

When you find a camp or retreat facility that you feel comfortable with, consider the benefits of building on that relationship. Always shopping around for a facility that is just a little less expensive can be costly in the long run.

Working with a facility and staff you know and trust will again

Your Own Notes

mean better pre-retreat communication and improve your chances of getting the level of service that is so important in making your retreat a positive one.

A footnote to all of us who tend to be procrastinators - start early in finding and reserving a retreat facility. The best dates and the nicest facilities get booked first. Consider reserving a facility six months to a year before you want to have a retreat. If you are happy with a facility, it might be a good idea to make your reservations for the following year before your retreat is over.

How do you find the right retreat facility for your group? Do your homework, know what you want, and then ask lots of questions. Initiate lots of pre-retreat communication within your group and the retreat facility.

Remember, it is always best not to make assumptions. You don’t want to be the retreat leader who walks into a camp office someday only to find out they weren’t expecting you!

Planning Your Program

In planning your program, refer to the research done when you were identifying your purpose and goals. Whether you are planning a youth retreat, a women's retreat, men's retreat, or family retreat, it is important to make sure you are offering your group what fills their "wants and interests." Also be sure you are keeping up with current trends. Don't rely on the old, "This is the way we've always done it" routine. Fresh ideas and subjects that relate to current issues and trends are a must if you want to keep your group interested. Know the people in your group and be sure your program is designed for them.

Speakers, Musicians, and Other Program People

The same principle applies to choosing a speaker and other program people. If your conference is depending on a key speaker as an attendance draw, make sure your speaker is well known and can talk about major issues that relate to the majority of your group. Often, the key speaker sets the tone of the whole conference. So it is important that speaker selection is done carefully and thoughtfully.

Music should also be planned to fit into the rest of your program and complement the speaker. Many times, the person who does your special music will not or cannot lead group singing. This should be discussed up front so that your musicians know what is expected of them. Also, plan for an accompanist if necessary. It is unusual to find one person who can fill all three roles-special music, song leader and accompanist.

For current, popular speakers and musicians, keep in touch with other groups who have done similar retreats for recommendations. You could appoint two or three people to research speakers and musicians. Suggest to them that they review speakers and musicians who have been successfully received at other current conferences. Ask for evaluations. Contact the program

directors for these events. Most are willing to share information and ways to contact speakers and musicians. Word-of-mouth is usually the best way to find the speaker you want.

Some final suggestions in selecting speakers and program people:

- Line up speakers well in advance. (For some well-known, popular speakers, a minimum of a one-year lead time is a general rule.)
- Do they agree with your purpose/doctrinal statement?
- Do they agree with your objectives for your retreat?
- Do you have good, valid recommendations? Or, have you read anything by this person or heard them speak?

Honorariums

Before contracting a speaker, establish your budget and determine what you can pay a speaker. Figure travel expense, meal and housing expenses during the retreat, as well as honorarium. Be sure to include your other program people's expenses into a budget also.

When considering what you will pay a speaker, remember that popular speakers often rely on speaking engagements as part of their annual income. Good speakers spend many hours in preparation and often this is

Planning Your Program (cont.)

underestimated when we try to place a monetary value on their ministry. Many speakers find that in adding up the additional costs involved in speaking, such as clothes and preparations, not to mention being away from home, they often lose money.

Make sure you have added enough to the retreat fee to cover speaker's costs. If you feel you have to charge too much to cover these extra costs, you might want to consider having speakers from within your group.

When you have decided what you can pay your speaker, let them know in your initial contact with him or her.

When possible, you may want to talk personally with the speaker first to make the agreement. Then follow-up your conversation with a written confirmation.

Travel

If your speaker is traveling by air, decide if you want to make the reservations or ask your speaker to make them. If they make their own reservations, state that you will reimburse them. Also clarify if you will be providing transportation to and from the airport. Or, if they wish to make other arrangements. In either case, the mileage should be included in your travel costs. Include information and directions to the airport nearest the site. If they are driving themselves, include driving instructions to the site.

Care of Your Speaker

Be considerate of your speaker's needs for rest and privacy. Speakers spend many hours in preparation and

traveling, which is usually very tiring. Talk with them to see what kind of scheduling they can handle comfortably. Consider time for informal availability, number and length of sessions, and time for rest, study or recreation. Make sure you have a comfortable, private place for them to stay. You may need to make arrangements for linens if your speaker is traveling or not accustomed to camp settings. A basket of fruit placed in their room is appreciated.

Written Agreement

Here is a suggested guideline of items to include in making a written confirmation to your speaker.

1. Your purpose statement
2. Date of retreat
3. Schedule of retreat. How many times they will speak?
4. Honorarium amount
5. Travel:
 - Mode of travel
 - Tickets will be ordered by _____ (optional)
 - Other mileage
 - Confirm that travel expenses will be covered by your group.
 - Nearest airport. Are you providing transportation to and from airport (optional)?
 - Directions to site.
6. Housing and meals will be provided as follows: _____

7. Books, tapes, albums:

If your speaker has published books or tapes, ask them to let you know if they would like you to have them available. How should sales be handled?

Planning Your Program (cont.)

Schedule

In making the schedule, be sure that there is enough free time for the people in your group to enjoy the setting and some recreation if they wish. It is often frustrating for the participants if the schedule is so tightly planned that they don't have time to relax or enjoy available recreation.

For this part of your program you could appoint one or two people who would be responsible for recreation and free time activities. Again, keep in mind the people in your group and their interests. Use every opportunity available at the retreat center for the people in your group to enjoy being outdoors or to do a variety of activities that they will enjoy. **Schedule activities which encourage letting go of formalities and having fun. These kinds of activities produce an atmosphere in which relationships are often strengthened and enhanced.** A balanced program is a good program. Too much of one thing (like sitting) can be tiring.

Your Own Notes

In the appendix are some basic schedules for different age groups which might be helpful to you. These are not intended to be complete, but could serve as a guide as you plan your own retreat schedule.

The Master of Ceremonies (this may or may not be the same person as the contact person for the group) should be someone who is familiar with the program and the program people, and who can relate well to the majority of your group. He or she should be well informed because it is their duty to make introductions, announcements and to keep the flow of the program going smoothly. To make sure your speaker is most effective, the M.C. should get them on early in the program without too many preliminaries.

If your budget allows, you could have a packet available at registration which could include a schedule, some note paper, workshop outlines, etc...

Some Tips on Money Matters

Choose a facility which will appeal to the majority of your group in terms of accommodations and service. A facility that is very inexpensive may not be attractive to enough people to make the retreat a success.

Read the contract carefully before you sign. Be aware of contract minimums (the number of people you guarantee will be there) and cancellation charges. **Use past performance, not wishful thinking, in setting a minimum number.** “We’re trusting the Lord for 250 people for this retreat,” is a great goal. But when only 35 women show up, the whole weekend flops.

Calculate all of the program, promotion and travel costs you will have and divide this by the minimum number of people you hope to have. Don’t forget to add in the room and board costs for your speakers or other resource persons (people that won’t be paying for their weekend but for whom you will be charged by the camp) when you are figuring out your total costs. Add this amount to the per person costs you are charged by the camp or retreat center. Make this your per person charge for the retreat. If you have more people attend than your minimum estimate you will have some money left over for next year’s deposit and promotion.

Find out from the retreat facility what is or is not covered in their per person charge. If you have to pay extra for any equipment or services you will want to figure this into your program charge. In comparing facilities in the first place be sure you know just what you are getting or not getting for the basic fee.

If you are concerned about keeping

the cost low so that everyone in your group can afford to attend, you might want to consider adding a couple dollars to the total price for everyone who can afford it. Then use the extra money as a sponsorship fund to help those who really do need some financial assistance. Also remember that charging too little for a retreat might make it sound like it’s not going to be all that great... it can make people wonder about just how rustic the facilities are that they will have to stay in!

Begin promoting well in advance (2 or 3 months for a weekend retreat), requiring a non-refundable deposit from each person who plans to attend. Deposits help people follow through on commitments. You are a lot less likely to have people cancel at the last minute when they have already made a substantial investment.

If you find yourself just a short time away from the retreat and you still haven’t reached your minimum - don’t panic - just be very creative. Try these options:

1. Start a phone campaign, calling every member and friend of your group
2. Tell group members they can invite a friend who’s never attended your group before to come along for half price
3. Invite another group within your organization to come along with you
4. Invite members of your group or other people you know to come along as your guests who otherwise were not planning to attend or who couldn’t afford the retreat.

Promotion

Once again refer to the research done when you were identifying your purpose and goals. If this research was done accurately and you are already zeroing in on what the people want, you have made your first step in successful promotion. The second step is communicating that purpose or goal to your group in an understandable and attractive way. It needs to be communicated in a way that will make people want to attend.

Personal Touch

You need people on your promotion team who are excited and enthusiastic about what this retreat is all about. Enthusiasm is contagious and sometimes your best way to get others interested. Select people who are willing to personally invite others to attend. The personal touch is usually the best way to promote.

Brochure

There are several things to consider when deciding how much money and effort you want to put into a brochure which describes your event. First, to whom are you going to distribute or send the brochure? How much are you depending on personal contacts for recruiting? What else are you doing to promote and what kind of response do you expect? What is your budget?

Before designing your brochure, refer again to your goals and purpose. Ask: "Who is this for?" "What are their needs, wants, interests?" "What is it going to do for them?" The answers will guide the work on your brochure.

Determine what it is that you are offering (i.e., relaxation, comfort, fulfilling relationships, peace of mind, inspiration, etc.). Remember that the purpose of the brochure is to:

1. Inform
2. Get them to come!

Keep it simple. Don't say anything that you don't have to say in the copy. Avoid clutter. The brochure will reflect the image of the event and the group sponsoring it, so make sure that it is done well and tastefully even if it has to be inexpensive. There are three fundamental ingredients in publishing a brochure:

1. Information
2. Clearly stated
3. Uniquely presented - very simple and direct.

It is also good to publish the schedule, which should include departure time and when the event is over; travel information and directions to site; information about the speaker/s, musician/s, and other program people; a registration form; and things to bring (sleeping bag, towels, etc.)

Other Promotion

Other forms of promotion you may consider, depending on your group and purpose, could be Public Service Announcements or paid advertising in local newspaper and radio stations. Of course nothing compares to advertising within your own constituency. This could include posters, newsletter articles, announcements in your bulletin, creative announcements and/or skits. Again, the personal touch and reinforcement of your group comraderie always pays off.

Registration

A registration form is usually included in the brochure or flyer describing your event. Registration information should be clearly stated, i.e.:

- Cost of event
- Nonrefundable deposit fee see “Some Tips on Money Matters”
- Early registration discount (optional)
- Any extra costs

It is a good idea to choose a person to be responsible for the registration process - a person who is good at detail and accounting.

Good communication with the retreat facility is essential since you are usually committed to a guaranteed minimum number. Check with the

Your Own Notes

retreat center to see what kind of housing is available to you, (i.e. how many beds in each cabin). A tour of the facility and the housing you will be assigned is also recommended. Often, the retreat center can provide you with room assignment sheets so that you can pre-assign housing to people as they register.

When the retreat begins, registration should be set up well in advance for early arrivals. The registration coordinator should appoint some people as greeters and cashier. Supplies at the registration tables should include: name tags, extra schedules, maps and directions on how to find their cabin or dorm. Find out ahead of time from the retreat center about the proper procedure for placing signs directing people to registration.

Evaluation & Follow-up

Preparing Your Evaluation

Evaluation forms do not have to be lengthy. In fact they should be short and simple to answer. The purpose of the evaluation is to help you:

- Evaluate the success of meeting your objectives.
- Know what they liked or disliked about the retreat. (Speakers, program, facilities, food, etc.)
- Get suggestions on what they want to hear, do, etc. at future retreats.
- Follow-up spiritual commitments and people who are new to your group.

Just phrase your questions in a simple way that will tell you these things. A sample evaluation is included in the appendix.

Your Own Notes

Planning Your Next Retreat

The best time to plan for your next retreat is right after this retreat is over, while ideas are fresh and enthusiasm is running high. It is also good timing for people to commit themselves to being on the planning team.

Use the information you have gathered from the evaluation forms. **Make decisions on the basis of majority opinions, not just one or two comments. The people who speak the loudest may be in the minority.** That is why a written evaluation is a good tool, because you hear from everyone - even the quiet participants.

Personal Follow-up

Choose people who are willing to follow up on spiritual commitments and make further contact with people who are new to the group.

Retreat Leader's Master Checklist

	Suggested Lead Time	Target Date	Actual Date
READ RETREAT PLANNING KIT	6-12 months		
DEFINE PURPOSE/GOALS	6-12 months		
CHOOSE FACILITY/DATE	6-12 months		
Reconfirm housing, meeting rooms, meal times, equipment needed, etc.	3-4 Months		
Send schedule to retreat center	3 weeks		
Give final numbers of people attending and confirm equipment needs.	1 week		
	On Arrival		
Meet with camp host at site. Finalize arrangements.			
PLAN PROGRAM	6-12 months		
Confirm Speaker	6-12 months		
Confirm special music and song leader	6-12 months		
Plan other program: workshops, select workshop leaders, recreation, free time activities.	1-3 months		
Plan schedule, send to program people	1-3 months		
Confirm travel for program people	2-3 weeks		
Confirm schedule and program with program people	1 week		
Draw checks for honorariums	2-7 days		
Packets made up: schedules, note paper, maps, etc.	On Arrival		
Meet with speaker/s and other program people before the retreat for prayer and review of purpose and objectives.	6-12 months		
MAKE BUDGET (See worksheet)			
PROMOTE	3-4 months		
Choose promotion team. Plan personal invitation strategy.	2-3 months		
Publish brochure	2-3 months		
Distribute brochure	1-2 months		
Send PSA's or other advertisements to newspapers and radio stations	1-2 months		
Arrange for announcements in Bulletin	3-6 months		
Other			
ORGANIZE REGISTRATION	2-3 months		
Registration Coordinator appointed	2-3 months		
Registration form and information completed and printed.	1 month		
Registration open. Begin setting up housing assignments.	1 month		
Registration day organized			
EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP	1-3 months		
Prepare evaluation form	End Retreat		
Choose people to follow-up on spiritual commitments and make further contact with people who are new to group.	End Retreat		
Compile information from evaluation forms	End Retreat		

Retreat Evaluation Sample

We would like to know how we have done as a planning committee in organizing this year's retreat. Please complete the following items and turn in to the registrar.

I attended this retreat because:

The most important thing I learned and/or did was:

As a speaker I thought (speaker's name) was:

What I liked most about (speaker's name) was:

I would like to recommend _____ as a speaker for future retreats.

At next year's retreat I would like to hear about or attend a workshop on:

An area which could be improved in the future is:

I felt the program was	Excellent	Very Good	Above Avg	Average	Needs Improved
The accommodations were	Excellent	Very Good	Above Avg	Average	Needs Improved
The food was	Excellent	Very Good	Above Avg	Average	Needs Improved
Overall my experience this weekend was	Excellent	Very Good	Above Avg	Average	Needs Improved

Additional Comments:

Optional:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Thanks for coming and for taking time to respond!

Sample Retreat Schedules

MEN'S RETREAT SCHEDULE (SAMPLE)

FRIDAY

7:00 Registration
 8:00-9:00 Meeting
 Singing
 Special Music
 Speaker
 9:30 Fellowship & Refreshments

SATURDAY

8:30-9:15 Breakfast
 9:30-10:00 Meeting
 Singing
 Special Music
 Speaker
 10:15 Break
 10:30-12:00 Workshop/Seminar
 12:30-1:15 Lunch
 1:30-2:45 Seminar
 3:00-5:15 Free Time
 5:30-6:15 Dinner
 6:30-8:00 Meeting
 Singing
 Special Music
 Speaker
 8:00-8:30 Break
 8:30-10:00 Small Group Discussion
 10:00 Night Owl Fellowship

SUNDAY

8:00-8:20 Early Bird Session
 8:30-9:15 Breakfast
 9:30-11:45 Meeting
 Singing
 Music
 Speaker
 Group Discussion
 12:00 Lunch
 1:00 Load Up and Head for Home

YOUTH RETREAT SCHEDULE (SAMPLE)

FRIDAY

7:45 p.m. Get-acquainted games or activities
 8:30 Group meetings
 Music & Singing
 Speaker
 9:45 Snacks
 10:00 Head to Bed
 10:30 Cabin group discussion
 response to speaker
 11:15 Lights Out

SATURDAY

7:00 a.m. Early bird group devotions
 (20 minutes/opt.)
 7:30 Rise & Shine/personal devotions
 8:30 Breakfast
 9:00 Group meetings
 Music & Singing & Speaker
 10:15 Cabin group response time
 10:45 Break - snacks
 11:00 Games or activities
 12:30 p.m. Lunch
 12:45 Prepare Cabin Group skits
 1:30 Free time
 5:30 Dinner
 7:00 Group Meeting
 Music & Singing & Speaker
 8:15 Cabin group response time
 8:45 Break-snacks
 9:15 Skit time
 10:30 Short group meeting
 Discussion stimulants for cabin
 group sharing time
 10:45 Head to Bed/cabin group sharing time
 11:45 Lights Out

SUNDAY

7:00 a.m. Early bird group devotions
 (20 minutes/opt.)
 7:30 Rise & Shine and Pack up
 8:30 Breakfast
 9:15 Group meeting
 Music & Singing & Speaker
 10:15 Free Time
 11:30 Group Meeting
 Singing (short)
 Speaker-led group sharing time
 12:00 Lunch
 12:45 Group picture
 1:00 Load up & head for home

Sample Retreat Schedules (cont.)

Fifth Annual First United Methodist Church Men's Retreat

October 21-23

Theme: WHAT DO I BELIEVE?

Dear Friend(s):

We are so pleased you are going to Jumonville and we hope it will be a pleasant and rewarding experience. Reservations have been made there for you. We hope this will not be necessary, but if you must CANCEL for any reason, PLEASE call the church office (724-222-3415), or Harry Thompson (724-222-3541) as soon as possible as we must make final confirmation of reservations with Jumonville by Monday A.M., October 17. It will be necessary for you to pay for any reservation made but not used. The following information may be helpful:

WHAT IS A MEN'S RETREAT?

This will be an informal time of sharing together in fellowship, inspiration, recreation, and spiritual growth. This can be a very fruitful weekend of not only relaxation but also for raising personal and group problems and sharing insights.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

The following schedule is very flexible and not meant to be a rigid routine we must follow all the time.

FRIDAY: Cars and drivers will leave at various times throughout the day. If you need a ride, contact Tom Jones. When you get to Jumonville, go straight to Martha Lodge or stop in the office if you need directions. Feel free to walk or explore as you wish. Harry Thompson, who is acting as our contact person, will check in our group at the Jumonville Office and make detailed arrangements.

8:00 - Communion

9:30 - Introduction to the theme, "What do I Believe?"

10:30 - Snack and Fellowship

SATURDAY: 8:30 - Breakfast

9:30 - Devotions

10:00 - WHAT DO I BELIEVE? (continued)

12:30 - Lunch

Afternoon free time (try exploring this very historic area, Washington's Rocks, Indian Trails, Jumonville Museum, Jumonville Cross, etc...great time for hiking, picture taking, napping, recreation....)

4:00 - WHAT DO I BELIEVE? (continued)

5:30 - Dinner

7:00 - Campfire, movie on Cults, more discussion, Devotions, Snack.

SUNDAY: 8:30 - Breakfast

9:30 - Personal time apart - Read and meditate on John 14:1-21

10:30 - Worship

12:00 - Dinner

In the afternoon you are welcome to stay as long as you wish to enjoy the grounds.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

1. Warm, informal clothes (NO formal clothes will be needed)
2. Sleeping bag or sheets and blankets, pillow, towels, soap
3. Hiking shoes, horseshoes, camera, or anything else you may want to use for recreation.
4. A flashlight
5. A Bible
6. Your registration fee
7. Any snack foods you may want

WHERE WILL WE BE?

Jumonville, 887 Jumonville Rd, Hopwood, PA 15445 (724) 439-4912

DIRECTIONS: Take Rt. 51, South into Uniontown - Take Rt. 40 East out of Uniontown up hill to Summit Hotel - At hotel turn left onto road to Jumonville - Jumonville will be on your right (or, 51 south, to 119 north, to Connellsville St. exit, in toward Uniontown, cross little road bridge and turn immediately left, go up hill to Jumonville. Follow the signs.

Budget Worksheet

COSTS:

Program:

Speaker.....\$ _____
Musician.....\$ _____
Other.....\$ _____

Travel:

Speaker.....\$ _____
Musician.....\$ _____
Other.....\$ _____

Promotion:

Brochure.....\$ _____
Other.....\$ _____

Miscellaneous:

.....\$ _____
.....\$ _____

TOTAL\$ _____

Divide by Minimum Number of People expected \$ _____

*Add per person charge of Conference Center \$ _____

****Your total Charge per Person** \$ _____

* Find out from the retreat facility what is or is not covered in their per person charge. If you have to pay extra for any equipment or services you will want to figure this into your program charge.

** If you are concerned about keeping the cost so low so that everyone in your group can afford to attend, you might want to consider adding a couple of dollars to the total price for everyone who can afford it. Then use the extra money as a sponsorship fund to help those who really do need some financial assistance.

If you have more people attend than your minimum estimate, you will have some money left over for next year's deposit and promotion.

EXCELLENT CROWD BREAKERS FOR ANY AGE

These crowdbreakers are suitable for any age group. It is necessary, however, that the leader be enthusiastic. It is surprising how even elderly people become crazy during these events, so don't be afraid to try new things.

HUMAN BINGO: This is good for any size group. Using a chart with different categories on it, people must find others who fit that category and must have them sign the sheet by the description. It is good to adapt the sheet to each group. If you have a larger group, it is better to use general categories. If the group is smaller and composed of those that are familiar with each other, it is good to include descriptions unique to those people; i.e., "mother's name is Helga". Winner can be by either who covers most of their sheet or who gets two bingos. An example sheet is included below.

TOILET PAPER PULL: Have someone who many people in the group know take a roll of toilet paper and walk around the room inviting everyone to take as many sheets of tissue as they think they will need for the retreat. Say something about a shortage of toilet paper for the weekend. When everyone has taken some sheets, announce that they must now tell one thing about themselves for every sheet they have taken.

MOVING PEOPLE: Everyone must sit in a circle. The leader has a list of forty to fifty descriptive sentences like those listed below. Each person who fits the description must move one chair to the right either onto the next chair or the next person. People will begin to pile up. The game continues until someone reaches his starting point.

1. Everyone with brown hair
2. Everyone who likes spinach
3. Everyone who has ever ridden a horse
4. Everyone who wears boxer shorts
5. Everyone who likes the Beatles
6. Everyone who...

BABY PICTURE GUESS: Before the retreat, contact relatives of those going to the retreat and arrange to have them give you a baby picture. Then at the retreat, have a poster showing all of the pictures. Give each person a slip to guess who is who. The one who guesses the most correctly is the winner.

HUMAN SCRABBLE: After dividing people into two or three teams, give each person a letter to be hung around their neck. Their letters should spell a word. At a signal, have each team scramble to spell their word standing in a line. The team to do this first is the winner.

CREATIVE CAPTION: Have each person look at this picture and make up their own caption to it. When everyone is finished, have them listen to all the captions and vote on the funniest one.

WAMPUM: With everyone sitting in a circle, have one person sit on a chair in the middle. This person is given a rolled up newspaper. Have everyone go around and give their names. The game then begins by someone calling another person and that person responding by calling another person before the person in middle with the newspaper hits him. If he did get hit before he called anyone, then he automatically becomes the middle hitter. The trick comes in this, however -- that when someone does get out of the middle by hitting someone before they were able to respond, he must call someone **BEFORE HE SITS DOWN**. If he sits down before calling someone else, the person in the middle can hit him and make him once again the hitter.

CONFUSION: Let everyone but one person have a chair in a circle. The person without starts the game by saying something applicable to himself and others in the group, like "everyone with blue

EXCELLENT CROWD BREAKERS FOR ANY AGE (cont.)

eyes.” At that point, everyone with blue eyes scatters to another seat, leaving all but one person sitting again. That person must then say another description and try to regain his seat. A rule is that everyone who fits the categories must move at least five seats away from the one he was just sitting in.

SITUATION GAME: Have everyone sit in a circle. Then have them whisper who they are in the person’s ear to the right of them. These should be wild answers like: Bugs Bunny, President Reagan, etc. Then have them tell where they are to the person on their left. Again, this should be a creative answer like: on top of Mt. Everest, in the bathtub, etc. Have everyone mix and find new seats, then telling the person on the right what they are wearing (boxer shorts, a new toupee). Then to the person on their left, they should tell what they are doing. They then tell everyone the things that other people told them. For example, “My name is Mickey Mouse. I’m wearing army fatigues. I’m in the bathroom doing pull-ups” could be a response.

NITWIT NAMES: With everyone sitting in a circle, have one person start by giving his name plus an adjective that begins with the first letter of his name. Some examples include: Terrible Tammy, Dummy Dave, Bitter Becky. The game continues by going around and each person giving his own crazy name, plus all of the people’s names that have gone before him!!! The last person must recite the names of everybody.

LETTER SCRAMBLE: Before the meeting starts, tape different letters to the bottoms of people’s chairs. When the group sits down, have everybody get their letter and then try to find others to form the word. The first group to form their word can get a prize corresponding to the word they formed. For example, “Certs” could be given to those who formed “Halitosis”.

QUICK CHANGE ARTISTS: Pair off into partners facing each other. Each player observes his or her partner’s appearance. Then the players turn around back to back and make two or more changes in their dress, hair, accessories, etc. When they face each other again, each partner must identify the changes made by his or her partner. Repeat the game several times by changing partners and increasing the number of changes made. (From Group’s Crowdbreakers and Great Games for Youth Groups) This is a good lesson for Junior High age in that people don’t watch them as much or as scrupulously that they may think.

BIRTHDAY YELL: Have each of the groups assigned a certain saying or action and at a determined starting time, yell and separate into groups.

January:	Shout, “Happy New Year!”
February:	Say, “Be My Valentine.”
March:	Blow (like the wind).
April:	Hop (like a bunny).
May:	Say, “Mother, may I?”
June:	Say, “Will you marry me?”
July:	Make fireworks sounds.
August:	Sing, “Take me out to the ball game.”
September:	Fall down.
October:	Shout, “Boo!”
November:	Say, “Gobble, gobble.”
December:	Say, “Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas!!!” in your best Santa Claus voice.

This is a good transitional mixer to get into smaller groups. Some possible variations are: lights off, eyes closed.

CAMPING COMRADES TREASURE HUNT:

- Find someone who is at the retreat or at this camp site for the first time. Discover something unique about them while shaking hands.

EXCELLENT CROWD BREAKERS FOR ANY AGE (cont.)

- Find someone who has been on retreat less than 2 times. Tell them why you have gone more often while putting your right hands on the other's shoulder.
- Find someone who likes hugs. Give them one!!
- Find someone who is presently wrestling with a values dilemma in their church or personal life and have them explain it to you. Maintain eye contact while sharing.
- Find someone who has been to Jumonville for a least 5 years. Close your eyes while sharing what they like best about it.
- Find someone who feels they have a good balance between friends and family. Close eyes while sharing how they maintain it.
- Find someone who came to know Christ at a camp. Sit on the floor while sharing.
- Find someone whose greatest strength is the same as yours. Pat each other on the back while sharing.
- Find someone who didn't take a shower today. Plug their nose while sharing the brand of soap you use.

Of the crowd breakers listed above, some were adapted from Ideas Books by Youth Specialties, Inc.

TYPES OF RETREATS

YOUTH RETREAT: This retreat can be planned for any age of youth, but should not combine two very distant age groups (for example, 9 - 11 years should not have the same programming as 12 - 15 years). Designed for a specific age group, everything should be centered around that age, including the speaker's message, meals, activities, games, transportation and amount of free time. The foremost thrust of this retreat should be to minister to the very complex needs of youth through a total experience. Such a retreat should not be reserved for only the youth group attendees of the church.

PLANNING RETREAT: We all know how difficult it is to take a "chunk" of time and look ahead without getting a hundred phone calls. This type of retreat is perfect for small groups who all have the same purpose - to plan ahead. Using a retreat for this function is often surprisingly refreshing and invigorating to those who participate even though they have actually gone there to work.

FAMILY RETREAT: Planned right, this retreat can be one of the most successful. Excellent for family unity, it at the same time promotes church unity. In considering such a retreat, one must keep in mind speakers who will facilitate family interaction as opposed to passive listening, discussion groups and the effectiveness thereof, games that all ages can do, and the balance of programmed time to free time.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING RETREAT: For leaders in any vocation, this type of retreat can be very enjoyable while at the same time get a great deal of work accomplished. Good in a church for session meetings and church committee leaders, programming should include one special event - such as a speaker, concert or Christian video production.

MARRIAGE RETREAT: For this crucial retreat, the setting is very important. It should be away from everyday concerns, without television or telephone, yet not too primitive that normal functioning becomes difficult. The speaker should be qualified, dynamic and very sensitive to the needs of couples. Other programming should be diverse, offering as much input as possible. At the same time, however, there should be time programmed for small group discussion then leading into partner discussion, especially if a particularly sensitive issue has been covered.

SINGLES/YOUNG ADULT RETREAT: This retreat would meet needs in an area where churches have always struggled. The study of a book of the Bible is good for such a group. Programming should include outdoor events such as hikes, activities that involve teams and not individuals, discussion groups about topics specific to this group (i.e. "singleness", "workplace Christianity") and many good crowd breakers done by an enthusiastic leader.

TRAINING RETREAT: This type of retreat can be done with any subject, from parent-teen relationships to Bible study to dealing with a major social issue of the day. In a learning format, this retreat style is conducive to workshops, hands-on learning and lecture. Recreational activities can be interspersed to make it effective.

FILM RETREAT: Instead of getting a speaker, why not get a series or a number of films to watch? Especially good for youth, such a retreat can show them that there are good alternatives to some of their subject matter, and media today in general could make for some very enlightening conversation.

ART RETREAT: Centered around a certain skill or craft, such a retreat can expose unknown creativity in individuals. Emphasize in your programming appreciation of the different gifts God has given each of us. Reactions to each art form should be given.

HUNGER RETREAT: This is an excellent way to teach others the value of fasting. Study the Old and New Testament characters who fasted - when and why. Look at all of the Scriptures on fasting

TYPES OF RETREATS (cont.)

and pray during normally scheduled mealtimes. This can be programmed in a number of manners, but until they break the fast, activities should not be too strenuous.

MEDITATION RETREAT: Great for communing with God, this retreat can be good for all ages. Spend a day or an entire weekend in worship and meditation. Program in times for Bible study, devotional time, thinking, quiet time, reading, discussion, and anything else appropriate.

SCRIPTURE RETREAT: Instead of a speaker, have either a Bible expositor or any leader plan to teach on a designated book of the Bible. Covering the entire book in one weekend gives the members a sense of the unity of Scripture and a sense of accomplishment. Activities and meals should be planned around the themes in the chosen book.

MULTI-CHURCH RETREAT: Invite a number of other churches to join you for a retreat. Have each church responsible for one day. Needed, though, are activities designed for interaction between the groups and crowd breakers which will necessitate people meeting new people.

Seasons:

FALL RETREAT: Good time to have church members (youth or adults) get reacquainted with one another. Also an excellent way to begin a new church calendar year. Can involve many activities and fun programming times, using outdoor facilities.

WINTER RETREAT: Snow activities - sledding, snow sculpting - appeal to those of all ages as long as a warm fireplace is provided as well. A retreat at this time of year can pick up a group which has the winter "blahs" and be refreshing to those caught up in their schedules, be it school or the workplace.

SPRING RETREAT: A retreat at this time of year satisfies the eager desires of people to get outside. Themes of rebirth, new beginnings and the freshness and joy of salvation are appropriate here.

Time:

LONG RETREAT: With more time, not every minute needs to be programmed. It allows for a relaxed pace of open discussion and spontaneous activities. Helps, too, with time for personal devotions and Bible reading.

SHORT RETREAT: More realistic, this retreat should give maximum input balanced with time to process it all. As an outlet for all of the input and new learning, fun activities are a must.

Other types of retreats:

Blind Man's Bluff Retreat
Signs of Man Retreat
Make a Movie Retreat
Music Retreat
Plan-as-you-go Retreat
Upper Room Retreat
Wilderness Retreat
Work Project Retreat
Lock-in Retreat

(the above were taken from the "Group Retreat Book")

This list is by no means exhaustive. It is simply meant to spurn you on to even further creativity. Don't doubt -- anything, even miracles can happen during a retreat. Go with the creative crazy ideas you or others have. They could ultimately change people's lives. Simply remember that what you are doing has eternal consequences. Go for it!!

RETREAT THEMES

A Book of the Bible	Faith	Parents & Family
A Chapter in the Bible	Fasting	Peace
A Character in the Bible	Forgiveness	Peer Pressure
Abortion	Freedom & Law	Perfection
Alcoholism	Friendship	Persecution
Angels	Fruit of the Spirit	Personal Awareness
Anger	Future	Personal Problems
Assurance	Gifts of the Spirit	Personal Relationships
The Atonement	Giving	The Person of Christ
Being a Christian in a Non-Christian World	God's Will	Phoniness
Blindness	Gossip	Prayer
Business World	Guilt & Forgiveness	Prioritization
Careers	Hate	Prophecy
Capital Punishment	The Holy Spirit	Putdowns
Celebration	How to Study the Bible	Redemption
Cheating & Stealing	Humor	Revolution
Christian Community	Identity	Rock Music
Christian Fellowship	Intimacy	Role Playing
Christian Joy	Jealousy	Sacrifice
Christian Liberation	Jesus	The Second Coming
Christian Maturity	Junk Food	Service
Christ & Politics	Kingdom of God	Sexuality
The Church	Lifestyle	Sex Roles
Cliques	Listening	Sin & Forgiveness
Clowning	Loneliness	Success
Communication	Lordship	Suffering
Cults	Love	Suicide
Dating	Marriage	Television
Dealing With Authority	Meditation	Temptation
Death	Mime	Togetherness
Depression	Miracles	Unity
Devotional Life	Morality	Wall Building
Discipleship	Moral Development	Wealth
Doubt	Music	Wisdom
Drugs	The Occult	
	Parables	

IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING THE THEME INTO A RETREAT

The theme is the unifying concept to your entire weekend. It is meant to drive home the main point of the retreat and to be the main teaching element. To have all things - meals, meetings, games, activities - revolve around one theme leaves an indelible impression on every individual involved. It is true that long after the retreat, people will not remember the words of the speaker or every song that was sung, but they will remember the main theme.

The main thing to consider in working out a theme with the specifics of the retreat is that detail is important. Pour through each meeting time, meal, free time, speaker's message and ask yourself with each event, "How can I make the theme clear in this time?" Soon you will find yourself immersed in creative ideas of how to tie in the theme. The following are suggestions to spur you on to even greater creativity.

MEALS: Oftentimes retreat planners overlook the potential of creativity at mealtimes. Natural fellowship occurs at meals and a generally relaxed atmosphere is almost always present. Caution is given that nourishment still be the main focus, but utilize all possible times of input is good.

- Backwards meal: All members must dress backwards and meal may be served backwards (dessert first). Possible themes include "What life is like without Christ," or "Alienation."

- Hat meal: Have each person wear a hat to the meal. A contest voted on by retreaters to determine the most creative hat, etc., would be a good idea. Theme suggestions could be "God as Covering," or "Crazy for Christ."

- Single Utensil meal: Give each person one eating utensil. These can either be uniform such as a spoon or each person could be given something different from the kitchen. Possible themes: "Dependency," "Handicaps," or "Thankfulness for the Things we Have."

- Bible Character meal: People must dress like a Bible character in order to receive their food. This could be used with any theme, but is especially conducive to the study of a book of the Bible. People would dress like the characters of the book being studied.

Having people dress up as characters, athletes, members of other countries, each other, etc., is easy to tie in to the theme and can be very successful.

Other examples of tying the theme would be having people feed each other or choosing some to be waiters and waitresses for a theme of servanthood. Fasting around the dinner table and having a time of prayer and discussion about the needs of other countries is effective. Eating foods from other countries is a good idea for a missions theme, to help them learn more about the country and identify with how missionaries must feel. Also, giving some tables more food than others can be effective in understanding poverty, giving away what you have, etc. To describe how those without felt is crucial to such a meal. A monk meal where everyone eats in silence can be used for a meditation retreat or a retreat studying different religions. Even such small things as having a birthday cake to celebrate the King or having candles to illustrate the light of the world are good and don't take much effort or time.

Although certainly not exhaustive, these ideas show how one can incorporate their theme into the so-called "ordinary" parts of a retreat.

ACTIVITIES: Activities are crucial to any retreat; big or small, family or youth. Because of the importance of this part of the retreat, it is imperative that the theme be present in each programmed activity.

- Sports: Any sport such as baseball, basketball, volleyball, hockey, soccer can be made to fit a number

IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING THE THEME INTO A RETREAT (cont.)

of themes by simple suggestions or adjustments. For example, one could play a baseball game in silence and tie into a theme of “Communication,” or “Observation,” as they watch how the interactions change.

By doing a simple sport using only one arm is excellent for “Dependence,” or “Handicaps.” Blindfolding some for a game can illustrate how we are in darkness without Christ and what it means to be in darkness. A simple scavenger hunt can be used to show appreciation of all that God has given us in creation. A hike can do the same.

- Games: With a “Win, Lose, or Draw” - type game, it is very possible to communicate your theme by simply having all of the things they are to draw be from a category which reflects your theme. For example, if you were using a theme of peer pressure you could have categories for things like “Just Say No,” beauty pageant, drugs, alcohol, dating, examinations, “Everybody’s Doing It,” gossip, football, etc.

A game of “Simon Says” can also be adapted easily to a theme of “Dating,” or “Peer Pressure.”

The “Ungame”, or an adaptation thereof, can be used under themes of “Unifying,” “The Body of Christ,” or “Openness/Vulnerability.”

Almost any game can be modified to fit your theme. It simply must be both verbalized by the leader and acknowledged by the participants to have effectively communicated the theme.

- Special Games: The “Pony Express” is an activity in which there are many stations with stunts such as swimming a lap of the pool, shooting a basket, eating a cracker and then whistling, etc. Two teams compete, each having a runner who travels to one station, waits until the stunt has been performed and then proceeds to the next station. This is a fun event because it is not typical and because no one feels excluded for not having a certain skill. It can be tied into a theme by naming each station or having what stunt is done at each station be smaller parts of the bigger theme itself.

Having an “Off Track Meet” where participants sign up for seemingly the typical events only to find out that they are anything but typical is good to speak of running the race for the Lord. For example, one who signs up for the shot put might be surprised to discover the item to be thrown is a 7 foot medicine ball. The 50 - yard dash could be a race walking with a box of washing detergent on their head (from “Dash” brand detergent). Again, this event is good because it does not involve doing one thing which some people might not be able to do, but instead involves a number of semi-skills. Doing a track meet this way, too, allows for some hilarious fun.

“Brain and Brawn,” is good to use for themes like “Knowing the Bible,” or “Ministry to the Whole Person.” Brain and Brawn involves having a representative from each team attempt to answer a question about the Bible before the opponent gets it. Whoever answers the question (by either knowing it or looking up the reference before the other person does) then gets to go on to the “Brawn” section. This part involves accomplishing things like standing up from an Indian-style position with a cup of water on your head (not using your hands), or carrying a broom on your fingertip for a designated distance. This is an activity good for all ages.

Having a penny carnival with all different sorts of booths is a good way to celebrate the King.

- Other: These suggestions are also good concerning the activities part of your schedule:

Carnival -- to celebrate life or the King

Skits -- to symbolize some aspect of the Christian life

Air Band Competition -- for a music theme or to show that being a Christian doesn’t just mean having rules

“Anything Goes” -- a semi-talent show with not much time to plan acts; shows creativity God has given us

Talent Show -- could be centered around one theme (all acts); i.e. Bible characters, spiritual gifts.

IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING THE THEME INTO A RETREAT (cont.)

RULES: Given in a positive manner and tied to the theme, these can be a joyful instead of a dreadful thing. For example, on the first night someone crazy could dress like Moses and carry two tablets with the “Ten Commandments” for the weekend written out. If the theme was peer pressure, people dressed up in gang attire could come out and enact a skit showing positive peer pressure that obeying the rules is how you fit in. Also, for the same theme, someone dressed up like “The Fonz” from Happy Days could come out and talk about how it is cool to follow the rules. Using a little creativity can tie any theme into a unique way to give the rules of a particular retreat.

HOUSING: Nothing major in this area can be done taking into consideration that the retreaters need somewhere where they feel comfortable processing all that is happening. Yet, just as aforementioned, small adjustments can powerfully bring home the theme. Relevant Scripture verses could be put up in posters on the walls or a cross could be erected in a focal point. For a retreat emphasizing fruits of the spirit, a piece of fruit could be put on each person’s bed or a basket of fruit could be left in the center of the room as a reminder.

MUSIC: This is most definitely an area where preparation is needed, yet is very often neglected until arrival at the retreat site. Very often even then it becomes, “Oh, by the way...” Music is a very important part of any retreat, no matter what the ages are. It is easy to find songs relevant to the subject. Although not all groups would find this desirable, secular songs about the subject could be listened to while members are collecting.

Then Christian songs which combat those lies with truth could be sung or used in skits. After all, music tells the story of our world. Themes of loneliness, sex, money, material world, suicide, guilt, etc. abound. Why not use them to show the desperation of a life of sin and then sing a joyful and worshipful song to show the celebration of being a Christian?

The musical choices of a retreat can bring a fragmented theme together. Therefore, it is suggested that a charismatic, capable leader be chosen to lead the songs. A person who is adept on the piano or guitar is needed as well. The two should then work together in preparation for the retreat. Mood is crucial to your meeting times and the music before will determine said tone.

TRANSPORTATION: The retreat actually begins when the cars leave the parking lot. How you arrange your drivers and people in the vehicles is important. You could choose a leader beforehand who will take each vehicle and lead a number of games. Preferably choose leaders of the youth group or church itself. The theme should begin to be set here. If the theme is the body of Christ, you might even want to stage a breakdown or running out of gas just to see the group come together. If you have a theme of cliques, you might break up some known cliques by assigning them different cars and talk to the members about how they felt afterwards. For a theme on peer pressure, you might let conversation go as it may and have leaders in each car sort of mentally record what is happening and discuss the peer pressure (positive or negative) which occurred in each vehicle.

SETTING: In choosing and planning a theme for a retreat, one of the best and most necessary ways to incorporate the theme is to use the setting of the retreat facility itself. For example, if the place has a number of hills, the whole retreat could be a study of the different aspects of Psalm 121, “I lift up mine eyes to the hills...” Or if you are having a summer or early fall retreat and there are good swimming facilities, the theme could be one on the cleansing of Christ. If it is a center in the woods or has a great deal of nature surrounding it, using themes like “All creatures wise and wonderful” or “Solitude” can be excellent. If nature is present, use it. After all, many of the greatest spiritual fathers have had great revelations or milestones in their faith in the wilderness with the Lord. So many people today, especially youth, spend so little time alone actually listening to or meditating on the Lord. Jesus Himself often went into the woods to pray and seek God. Thus, we have a great example of reasons for having a retreat as well as using nature to the benefit of all.

SPECIAL: Special events are a must to any retreat. The speaker’s message should definitely tie into the theme. Most people consider this, but often forget how a good movie choice or good concert choice

IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING THE THEME INTO A RETREAT (cont.)

for a retreat can put more meat on the bones of a retreat theme. If your theme is suicide, a movie could be shown which contains a suicide in it. Analysis afterwards of the different aspects of the movie is necessary in order that the proper truths about the theme be communicated. Never leave people questioning without taking them to the truth of Scripture first.

A concert, too, is great to demonstrate to young Christian people that being a Christian is a lot of fun not the “drag” that some make it out to be. Clue the concert-giver beforehand to your topic and you’d be surprised how well themes can tie into all sorts of music.

Other ideas for incorporating the theme into a retreat schedule include:

- (1) how you arrange chairs at a meeting (think about how well that would work with a theme cliques!)
- (2) role playing
- (3) having members write letters to God that you will send them later in the year. The letters would, of course, be concerning the topic which you have been studying.
- (4) A commitment service where members commit themselves to change or meditate on the things that need worked on in their lives. Using candles or other symbolism at such a meeting is essential. Atmosphere of the meeting could make or break it. A foot washing service could be done with a theme of servanthood.

There are many other ways to incorporate a retreat theme into the format of the retreat itself. This has been designed to simply spark ideas. Sometimes the smallest things make the biggest difference in bringing home the real truth of what is being taught. Just remember that even the most “ordinary” events or activities can be made to fit virtually any retreat.