
Running a Great Session Retreat

Rather than asking the staff or an outside resource person to plan the retreat, form a small planning group which includes the minister.

Tasks for the Planning Committee

Well in advance

- * Pray. Ask God to guide you in making decisions that will be helpful and suitable for the entire group.
- * Define location. Can you find a fresh setting for the retreat? In familiar surroundings it is easy to get caught up in past memories and decisions. A new location is nearly always better.
- * Overcome obstacles to attendance. Think of all the reasons why people might not be able to come-childcare, work, transportation. How can each of these concerns be addressed and overcome?
- * Define the purpose. Ask: Why are we doing this retreat? What outcome do we want? Choose a theme.
- * Choose speakers, worship or music leaders.
- * Choose date and length of retreat.
- * Determine cost and whether people will be asked to contribute.
- * Determine registration procedure.
- * Communicate preliminary plans to rest of session. Solicit feedback to make sure your planning group is on the right track.

Six weeks in advance

- * Begin promotion. Make a flyer with date, time, theme, what to bring, phone numbers and registration section. At your meeting, do a humorous skit-"Top Ten Reasons to Go on the Session Retreat."

Four weeks in advance

- * Check in with retreat leaders-speaker, facilitator, music/worship co-ordinator.
- * Check registration numbers. If they are low, make phone calls to personally invite people.
- * Send out maps to retreat centre, if needed.

Two weeks in advance

- * Finalize retreat schedule. Send leaders a copy of the schedule.
- * Find people to help at registration time and provide welcome. You may want to provide muffins, coffee, decorations, name tags.
- * Create an evaluation form which participants can fill out prior to leaving the event.

One week in advance

- * Gather up needed materials-chart paper, markers, Bibles, equipment, evaluation forms.
- * Ask someone to take a camera to the retreat.

Day of the Retreat

- * Arrive early to set up registration table and coffee.

One week after retreat

- * Write thank-you notes to leaders.
- * Meet with others on the planning group to evaluate the retreat. Ask: How will the concerns and learnings from this retreat be incorporated into the life of our church?