

RETREAT/CAMP PLANNING GUIDE

Table of Contents and Check List

- Purpose of Guide
- Purpose of Retreats/Camps
- Time Table
- Personnel
- Facility, Site and Service Selection
- Costs
- Promotion
- Schedule
- Prayer
- Contract, Rules and Permission Slips
- Health, Safety and Liability
- Debriefing and Follow-up
- Insider Information
- Biographical
- Sample registration form
- Sample schedule

PURPOSE of GUIDE

Retreats and camps are increasing in popularity every year. Youth ministries see the spiritual impact of retreats and camps on their youth. Adults remember the beneficial spiritual experience they had as children at camp and now want it at this time in their life. All progressive church and church related ministries compliment their programs with this special event. Church leaders testify they can accomplish more spiritually and relationship building during a retreat or camp than all the other programs combined for the year.

If this is your first retreat or your 50th this information will be valuable. The more you are able to plan and prepare ahead the better the success. This information is not theory or outdated, but tried, evaluated and found successful. We want you to have the best retreat possible and accomplish the spiritual goals for your retreat. The guide should answer a lot of questions, provide logistical information and practical recommendations; covering all major and many minor details related to planning a retreat.

We know that quality and spiritual-minded ministry organizations choose Walnut Hills Retreat to compliment their program. This guide is a part of our commitment to helping you provide that level of quality. Read the entire guide as there are sequential elements for planning that are of a timely nature.

This guide may be reproduced in its entirety and without modification as long as there is reference given to Walnut Hills Retreat Ministries and Bruce Tippetts.

PURPOSE OF RETREATS

If you don't know what your target is, you will not hit it!

Decide up front what the retreat you are planning should accomplish. Write down the purpose and the goals for the retreat to keep you focused. Be sure your entire leadership team agrees to and knows the purpose of the retreat.

- * Decisions
- * Fun
- * Training
- * Evangelism
- * Fellowship
- * Discipleship
- * Planning
- * Relationships
- * Relax
- * Teaching
- * Study
- * Organization
- * Counseling
- * Growth
- * Evaluation
- * Preaching

Deciding the purpose and goals of your retreat or camp is first and foundational in formulating your plans. Everything from the theme, speaker, program, activities, facilities, schedule, personnel and so on are affected. All elements of the retreat should reflect or harmonize your purpose not just your speaker. Having everyone participating in the planning understand what the purpose is allows for focus. This focus keeps issues, time and other resources directed appropriately. Communication and organization can be disrupted if the expectations are different among the people planning the retreat. Knowing the purpose and goals defines for everyone what to expect and how to plan all the other elements of the event. Having a purpose with goals allows you to evaluate the degree of success at the conclusion of your retreat.

Look at the overall needs of those participating to help select a purpose. Retreats are a major part of your annual strategic planning and so the purpose and goals will reflect that. Please understand the importance of knowing and implementing your purpose.

TIME TABLE SCHEDULE

Quality retreat/camp facilities are regularly reserved a year in advance because of their popularity and high percentage of return groups. It is appropriate planning to start planning the retreat a year in advance by setting in place several key elements. The recommended Time Table below comes from planning hundreds of retreats for three decades. Of course, you can modify this schedule to your situation. Planning on this Time Table will reduce stress, improve quality and reduce potential problems. Make sure you know the dates when all specific items are to be completed and communicate this to your leadership team.

Often you will plan your Time Table by starting with the date of your retreat and working backwards. Allow enough time for planning meetings and then execution of each element.

12 Months Plus

- ❑ Retreat/camp coordinator selection and acceptance
- ❑ Retreat/camp committee selection and acceptance
- ❑ Purpose of retreat/camp defined and team agreement
- ❑ Retreat/camp facility selection and contract secured
- ❑ Event date in organization's master calendar
- ❑ Prayer

6-12 Months

- ❑ Policies and guidelines (so your staff knows what is expected)
- ❑ Schedule from time of departure to return
- ❑ Personnel commitment (counselors, cooks, program, nurse, etc)
- ❑ Speaker selection and confirmation
- ❑ Prayer

2-6 Months

- ❑ Promotion (brochure and poster)
- ❑ Determine the cost for each person
- ❑ Meet with all persons (committee and staff) to tie up any loose ends and answer questions. Clarify individual assignments & responsibilities.
- ❑ Design and purchase shirts or other items that must be purchased with some lead-time. (i.e. promotional items,

souvenirs, items to remind campers of the retreat experience and lessons after the retreat.)

- Prayer

0-2 Months

- PROMOTION – PROMOTION - PROMOTION
- Camper sign up with permission slips and non-refundable deposit
- Purchase programming and activity equipment
- Purchase food
- Call camp and review contract plus any changes
- Prayer

1-2 Weeks after Retreat

- Tally evaluations and distribute
- Debriefing and follow up
- Start process over for next years retreat/camp
- Prayer

PERSONNEL

Planning Committee

Everyone today expects more out of their church programs and leaders. Planning a camp/retreat takes a lot of effort and resources to do it right. This undertaking requires a committee/team that will commit and then oversee the many responsibilities that are a part of this Planning Guide. Making excuses for your retreat/camp event when things go wrong that could have been prevented is no longer acceptable. The committee members will be a key factor in designing and implementing a successful retreat/camp plan. People to consider should easily take on responsibilities and complete tasks by assigned time. Leaders from the church body that can give wise council and act, as a liaison between you and other groups is important. Members should have enthusiasm and be willing to promote the event to others.

Retreat/Camp Planning Committee

- ❑ Accommodations
- ❑ Staff selection and training
- ❑ Schedule, program and activities
- ❑ Promotion
- ❑ Finances
- ❑ Fund Raising (if necessary)

Staff

Nothing has a greater impact and influence on your campers during your retreat/camp than your staff. All the other elements of the camp schedule and program do not carry as much weight. Selecting, referencing, background check and training your staff is imperative. Having a manual with qualifications, job descriptions, policies and camp rules are extremely important. Staff training makes sure nothing is taken for granted. The time spent in properly selecting and training your staff is a necessary investment. In today's Christian society you are neglectful if this process is not done properly.

The purpose, schedule, program, number of campers, transportation, facility and site will determine your staffing needs. Discuss with the retreat/camp employees to know what personnel they provide and what is required by

government regulations. Please understand the government standards are minimum requirements and as Christian ministries we should do better than the basics.

Staff During Retreat

- Speaker
- Counselors
- Cooks/kitchen
- Nurse/EMT
- Program
- Activity
- Lifeguard

FACILITY, SITE and SERVICE SELECTION

Visiting and then selecting a retreat/camp facility, site and support services to host your event are extremely important. These three elements the camp provides can either be a blessing or nightmare. Selecting a camp that compliments your purpose, goals and group expectations is vital in the success of your retreat. Camps should create a “retreat feel” atmosphere with their facilities, site and staff service. People today expect facilities to be clean, comfortable, convenient and in good repair. Sites should be nicely landscaped with flowers, bushes, trees and in a bucolic setting. Mosquitoes, flies, wasps, nuisance plants and odors should not be a part of your camp experience. Well maintained roads, signage, trails and grounds is important. The first impression you have will be the same as your group when they arrive. You and your group should be treated like guests. Having a staff member greet you when you arrive and make sure your needs and questions are addressed. Access to camp staff your entire stay is vital especially in case of emergency. Staff should be professional, friendly, accommodating, sensitive, knowledgeable and understand your group. The camp you use and how well they accommodate your group will reflect on you and your ministry.

Check List of Questions to Ask During Your First Initial Visit

- ❑ What are your first impressions when you arrive at camp property
- ❑ Are the camp staff professional, friendly and knowledgeable
- ❑ Are there neighboring businesses, homes, development or animals that will negatively impact your group
- ❑ Ask if there will be other groups, programs or activities on site that will affect your retreat
- ❑ Ask how many campers were injured in the last two years requiring medical treatment
- ❑ Ask about the camp staffs educational background and types of certifications as it relates to camp ministry
- ❑ Ask about the number of years the camp director has operated camps
- ❑ Ask how often the camp is inspected and what type of inspections

Facilities, Site and Service Check List

FACILITIES

- ❑ Food service/kitchen

- Can you do your own cooking or do you need to purchase meals from camp?
- Is there an extra cost if you use the camp's kitchen?
- Is the kitchen well stocked with equipment?
- What are the meal times?
- Are the Facilities clean?
- Sleeping quarters
 - How many people per room?
 - Are the beds comfortable?
 - Where are the bathrooms located?
 - Are facilities heated and or air-conditioned?
 - Are the Facilities clean?
- Meeting areas
 - Do rooms compliment your worship, teaching, praise and study?
 - Is seating comfortable?
 - Is audiovisual equipment available? Cost?
 - Are facilities heated and / or air-conditioned?
 - Are the Facilities clean?
- Bathrooms
 - Proximity of bathrooms to sleeping quarters and activity areas?
 - Number of people expected to use each bathroom?
 - Number of toilets, sinks and showers?
 - Handicapped accessible?
 - Are the Facilities clean?
 - Is there always plenty of hot water for showers
- Dining
 - Seating capacity?
 - Pleasant meal atmosphere?
 - Are the Facilities clean?
- Recreation
 - What do you use when it rains?
 - Gymnasium
 - Recreation room
 - Swimming pool or lake
 - Recreation equipment
 - Outdoor activities
 - Are the Facilities clean and in good repair?
 - Is there a Campfire area?
- SITE

- Landscaped nicely
- Litter free
- Maintenance areas away from view
- “Junk” not laying around
- No safety hazards
- Complimented with flowers, shrubs and other plantings
- Clear signs directing guests?
- Bugs, odors and nuisance plants

□ SERVICE

- Professional
- Experienced
- Friendly
- Accommodating
- Knowledgeable

□ Additional Items to Consider in Comparing Camps

- Heating/air conditioning
- Carpet
- Decorations
- Furnishings
- Clean
- Functional
- Good repair
- Extras

COSTS

The saying “you pay for what you get” is the case with Christian camps. Camp organizations know what the other camps in the region are charging for their facilities and services. Most camps are only charging you a portion of the actual cost. Many groups incorrectly believe they are financially supporting the camp ministry through their fees. Financial donations, volunteers and gifts in kind from churches and individuals help keep costs down. Good management practices from the staff and board also contribute towards this effort. Camp ministries usually do everything possible to be good stewards to keep camp fees affordable. Good service, clean, safe, functional and quality facilities take a lot of hard work and cost. When figuring the actual cost of a camp stay, make sure all the fees are totaled up. Make sure that you have thought about any damages that your group may be responsible for and how you will pay for it.

Figuring out what to charge per person is not a complicated process. Here is a list of items to include.

1. Camp fees
2. Meals
3. Program/activities/games/shirts
4. Promotion
5. Transportation
6. Speaker
7. Unexpected expenses and next years deposit

Example based on 50 participants staying for three days, two nights and five meals.

1. Camp fee	\$23.00 a night X 2 nights	\$46.00
2. Meals	\$2.00 raw food costs per meal X 5 meals	\$10.00
3. Program/activities/games/shirts	\$500.00 divide by 50	\$10.00
4. Promotion	\$100.00 divide by 50	\$2.00
5. Transportation	\$100.00 divide by 50	\$2.00
6. Speaker	\$300.00 divide by 50	\$6.00
7. Unexpected expenses and next years deposit	5-10%	<u>\$3.70-\$7.40</u>
	TOTAL	\$79.70-\$83.40

Less sponsorships or scholarships from church or individuals.

PROMOTION

Promotion is a significant element to the success of your retreat. Leaders cannot in today's busy society use the typical points of advertising to get the usual results of a few years ago. I need you to understand that a great effort is required in reaching your attendance goals. You are competing with a variety of other "priorities" in peoples lives. Standard promotion practices of just a couple of years ago are no longer effective. Putting out a brochure, making public announcements and information in a church bulletin just informs people there is an event coming up. To get people to sign up and commit requires personal contact, verbal invitation and follow up. Friends asking friends works great and is important. Each group is different in what promotion works effectively; please understand from now on what worked in the past does not get the same results. Here are some promotion suggestions and it would be good if all would be implemented.

- ❑ Skits
- ❑ Public announcements
- ❑ Posters
- ❑ Brochure
- ❑ Testimonials
- ❑ Pictures/wall display
- ❑ Manned table display
- ❑ Web site
- ❑ Letters/postcard
- ❑ Phone calls
- ❑ Bulletin
- ❑ E-mail

There is no substitute for personal follow-up and contacts. It is critical to involve your leadership team in personally inviting people to attend your retreat or camp!

SCHEDULE

The schedule should take into account: your purpose, the camp facilities, age and number of participants, special needs and program. All these factors will have some effect on the schedule. Allowing time for adequate rest, fellowship, recreation and personal devotions are important. These factors will determine the amount of number and time for the spiritual meetings, number and type of activities and special events. Think outside the box of typical activities conducted “in town” and use the unique facilities, settings and atmosphere of the camp in your schedule. Ask the camp staff for ideas, as they probably know what works well. Consider all the special features of the camp and implement them accordingly. The schedule starts when you depart for the camp and concludes when you get home. Camp directors call “free time” in the schedule *destructo time*. Proper supervision and knowing where all your campers are at all times is required. Giving campers the choice to participate in different activities or be in specific places is wonderful as long as there is supervision. Make sure you do not forget the snack times.

It is important not to overcrowd your schedule. Be sure to include time for cleanup after meals and at the end of the retreat.

PRAYER

The overall purpose of your retreat is to impact your participants spiritually in a way that will count for eternity. Since our mission is spiritual we need to tap into God’s resources and that requires prayer. Prayer and proper planning will make your retreat a success. Prayer is required before, during and after the retreat. Recruit the church, parents and others to participate and keep them informed. Be creative in making sure all the campers are prayed for. Communicate with your prayer partners the results of the retreat.

CONTRACTS, RULES and PERMISSION SLIPS

Most camps have contracts that must be completed with a deposit to secure your time with them. Reading and knowing what is included in these papers is vital. Reviewing these documents days prior to your arrival is also important. Camps may have penalty provisions if you do not perform according to contract information provided. Cancellations and changing your date usually requires some responsibility on your part. Deposits are usually earnest money that is not refundable and there may be more financial accountability if you cancel.

Camp rules typically focus on health and safety plus minimizing negative impact on facilities and others. Each camp has specific rules that make sense for their camp ministry. The camp board, insurance company and health department all have proper input in their make up. Sometimes your activities may impact camp rules; ask camp director permission before taking anything for granted. Leaders must make sure all participants know every rule that will affect them.

A permission slip and emergency medical release is typically required for each minor. Check with your attorney and/or insurance company as to what they recommend.

HEALTH, SAFETY and LIABILITY

These items can scare you out of the ministry. The personal exposure we have to liability today is very alarming and many times not taken seriously. Leaders must think about all aspects of their event and make critical evaluation of each part. Today's society wants every thing to be extreme and that usually means taking risks. Do not take for granted that just because a camp offers certain activities that they are safe. Someone getting hurt or sick should never be attributed to something you could have prevented. Most accidents occur after several items have been compromised. Supervision and proper planning are your best allies. Having a nurse or EMT and a first aid kit is important.

Emergency contacts, Medical Release and insurance information should be included in your registration forms in case a camper becomes ill. For minors, parental permission signature should also be included on the registration form. Be sure to include their doctor's name and phone number, emergency contact names and numbers. These should be kept readily available throughout the retreat in case of an emergency. It is advisable that your organization's lawyer reviews these forms.

DEBRIEFING and FOLLOW UP

Evaluating your retreat will provide you the most vital information in determining its success, as it relates to your purpose and goals. This process also gives you the most accurate information on planning next year's retreat. Follow up with discipleship to any individuals that made decisions. The follow up meeting should be with all staff and done within two weeks after the event.

Evaluation sheets or surveys that are filled out at the end of the retreat can provide great feedback for the next retreat or camp. Word questions carefully and keep it short if you want good feedback. Schedule a time for the campers to complete the survey and return it to you before the retreat is over. This is also a good time to ask who would be interested in helping with the next retreat.

INSIDER INFORMATION

Tricks of the trade and a lot of insider advice have already been given in the proceeding information. The following is additional knowledge that will be beneficial to planning your retreat. For example, many leaders will contact a camp with a specific date in mind because they have already made confirmation with a speaker for that date. Securing the camp first and then finding a speaker giving them a date is proper sequence. Quality camps have limited availability and their open dates are snatched up quickly.

Ask the camp if there are dates or times of week when rates are cheaper. The best time to contact camps is weekday mornings. Develop a relationship with the camp. (You might be surprised what they will do for you). Always schedule an appointment to visit the camp. Be ready to sign a contract and apply a deposit during your visit. Support the camp financially with gifts in

kind and volunteer work groups. Require a substantial non-refundable deposit from your participants (50-100%). Use camp staff for ideas. Give incentives to register early instead of penalties for registering late. To help keep costs down have every one bring a two-liter pop, chips and or cookies. Put the camp on your mailing list. Contact the camp several weeks prior to your retreat if you have any changes or special requests. Ask the camp for names and phone numbers of leaders who have used the camp previously. Ask if the camp can give permission to use some of their items for skits, activities and games.

BIOGRAPHICAL

Rev. Bruce Tippetts has loved serving in the camp ministry for almost 30 years. He is currently Founder and Executive Director of Walnut Hills Retreat. Employed in a variety of staff positions at six different camps throughout the U.S. Bruce has consulted for a variety of camps and denominations concerning their camp program and facilities. Bruce holds certifications in several camp-related disciplines. He has served on many not-for-profit boards, several times as president or chairman, serving two separate terms as President of Indiana Christian Camping International where he is currently President Elect.

Appendix:
Sample Registration Form
Sample schedule

SAMPLE REGISTRATION FORM FOR ADULTS

<Retreat Name>

Registration Form

The <Retreat Name> Retreat will again be at Walnut Hills Retreat in Brown County. It will begin Friday Evening <date> and end about Noon on <Date>. Join us for another great time of fun, fellowship and spiritual growth.

Please complete this registration form and return it with the registration fee to <Team Leaders' Names> by <Date normally at least two weeks before retreat>. Please register as soon as possible so we can make plans and purchase food and supplies.

Your Name (Print): _____

Address: _____

I will attend the entire retreat (Friday night through Sunday noon) Yes/No _____

If NO, please note times you will miss:

NOTE: The lessons and activities build on each other. To get the most from the weekend, you will want to join us for the whole weekend. The first lesson will be on Friday night this year so don't miss out!

In case of emergency, please call: _____
phone: _____

Medical Release:

In case of an emergency where I am unable to authorize medical treatment for myself and the above person is not available, I authorize <Names of leaders or camp nurse> to provide first aid and to authorize emergency medical treatments for me.

My Doctor is: _____ *Phone* _____

My Medical Insurance Company is: _____

Signature: _____ *Date:* _____

(NOTE: If under 18 years old, a separate parental consent form is also required.)

Registration Fee: *Veteran Retreat Attendees (\$65)*
 First Time Attendees (\$55) *<special rates can attract people>*
 New members in 2001 (\$35)

The Registration Fee is due when the registration is turned in!

No refunds after <date one week before retreat>.

Scholarships are available, PLEASE don't let finances prevent you from coming!

(Please make checks payable to " _____ ")

SAMPLE RETREAT SCHEDULE

(in MSEXcel format)

<Retreat Name>

The following is the planned schedule for the retreat.

Friday Jan. 26, 2001

6-8:00 Meet at camp and settle in (Eat before you come!)
8:00 Start Evening Program
Lesson #1
10:30 Prayer & Quiet Times
11:00 Respect those who need their sleep

Saturday Jan. 27, 2001

Quiet Times
8:00 Breakfast
Cleanup
9:30 Lesson #2
Small & Large Group Discussion & Questions
Personal Application
Free Time
12:00 Lunch
Cleanup
1:00 Lesson #3
Small & Large Group Discussion & Questions
Personal Application
Free Time
5:30 Dinner
Cleanup
6:30 Lesson #4
7:30 Quiet Time
8:00 Fireplace Program
11:00 Respect those who need their sleep

Sunday Jan.28, 2001

7:30 Quiet Time
8:00 Breakfast
Cleanup and Load vehicles
9:30 Worship Service
Camp Cleanup
12:30 Leave Camp

As you can see, a full weekend is planned. We ask that you make every