Welcome to Your Retreat Planning Packet

It is our hope and prayer that this manual will be a help to you in planning a retreat at one of the four sites within the Susquehanna Conference. This manual is a collection of material from a wide variety of places and times. We have tried to adapt the following material to be most useful to you:

*Site Contact Information
*Why A Retreat?
*Choosing a Facility
*What Our Sites Offer
*Planning Your Retreat
*Promotion
*Sample Letter of Registration
*Evaluation and Follow Up/Sample Evaluation
*Retreat Leaders Checklist
*Budget Worksheet

Don’t hesitate to contact us at any of the sites listed below if you would like additional help or information. Our philosophy towards service and hospitality in the Susquehanna Conference Camp and Retreat Ministry is to provide opportunities for authentic relationships with Jesus, experienced in community and in the beauty of God’s creation.

Site Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp Penn</th>
<th>Greene Hills</th>
<th>Mount Asbury</th>
<th>Wesley Forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camp Penn</td>
<td>Greene Hills</td>
<td>Mount Asbury</td>
<td>Wesley Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hykes-Site Director</td>
<td>Charlie Renner-Site Director</td>
<td>Daphne Orr-Site Director</td>
<td>Emily Sliski-Site Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home: 717-762-6869</td>
<td>Fax: 814-669-9503</td>
<td>Fax: 717-486-3779</td>
<td>Fax: 570-922-1334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax: 717-762-0080</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:greenehills@susumc.org">greenehills@susumc.org</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:mountasbury@susumc.org">mountasbury@susumc.org</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:wesleyforest@susumc.org">wesleyforest@susumc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website: <a href="mailto:camppenn@susumc.org">camppenn@susumc.org</a></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.susumcamps.org">www.susumcamps.org</a></td>
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Please contact the individual sites for more information and to reserve your retreat dates.
Why a Retreat?

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. The Susquehanna Conference Camp and Retreat sites were created solely for you to experience and hear God. These places are set apart from other spaces, because the creation, the upkeep, the reason for existence, is to create a space for people to be able to discover God over and over again. These elements make a retreat a unique time for relaxation, inspiration, learning and just having fun with friends and family.

How to Choose a Retreat Facility

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”
- Seasonal cabins with no heat?
- Do we want to cook for ourselves or have the meals provided? If we do our own cooking, is the style available at all sites and will there be an extra charge?
- What kind of meals do we want?
- Do we want bathrooms in the cabins or are outside shower houses okay?
- How much money do we want to spend, and more importantly, what is the group as a whole willing to spend?
- 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?
- What dates do you want your retreat?
- When do you plan to arrive and depart?

**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.

Reservations must be made through the specific site you with you reserve. Please see site specific contact information on the first page of this Retreat Planning Packet.
# What the Sites of the Susquehanna Conference Offer!

**Camp Penn** – is our only seasonal site. It is located in the southern portion of the conference near Waynesboro PA. The site provides a more rustic style of retreats from May 1st – 31st and from the last week in August through the end of October.

- There is no heat in any of the buildings with the exception of the Recreation Hall with two fireplaces.
- Food options offer groups a choice of doing their own cooking or the staff providing meals.
- Dormitory style sleeping with a total of 176+ beds available with connected remodeled bath house facilities.
- Pavilion Rental available
- TV/VCR/DVD, overhead projector, LCD projector, and screen are all provided at not extra cost.
- Basketball, volleyball, hiking, biking, fishing, horseshoes, and outpost camping are available for outdoor recreation.
- Indoor activities include: pool, ping pong, foosball, and a variety of board games.

**Greene Hills** – is a year round site. It is located in the northwest portion of the conference in Barree PA which is near Huntingdon. The site provides a bed and breakfast style of lodging.

- The Manor sleeps 38 people on two floors. Various bed styles are offered from bunk beds to single beds.
- Semi-private bath rooms are a part of the Manors comfort.
- Linen service is an option.
- Food is provided by site staff in a family style setting.
- TV/VCR/DVD, overhead projector, LCD projector, and screen are all provided at not extra cost.
- Outdoor activities include: hiking, fishing, volleyball, basketball, climbing wall, a group initiative course, and a large recreation field.
- Indoor activities include: ping pong, a variety of puzzles and board games.
- Seasonal cabin rentals are available.
- RV Park Rentals along the banks of the Little Juniata River available

**Mount Asbury** – is a year round retreat facility. It is located in the south central portion of the conference near Newville PA. This site provides everything from a more rustic stone Gray House with stained glass and Family Cottage, to beautiful and recently built Retreat Facility.

- Asbury Lodge sleeps 54 people in a single to quad arrangement. Full linen service is provided in this facility. Cable TV in common areas, and wifi throughout the building is also provided.
- The Gray House sleeps 14 people in bunk beds.
- The Family Cottage sleeps 7 people in bunk beds and a double bed.
- Food service is provided by site staff in buffet style for guests in the Asbury Lodge.
- Guests staying in the Gray House and the Family Cottage can provide their own meals.
- TV/VCR/DVD, overhead projector, LCD projector, flip pad and screen are all provided at no extra cost.
- Indoor activities in the Asbury Lodge include: ping pong, pool, air hockey and shuffleboard, as well as a variety of board games.
- Outdoor activities include: one mile hiking trail on site, portable yard games, within driving distance of Pine Grove Furnace State Park and Kings Gap Environmental Education Center
How do you determine which of our facilities is right for your group? Do your homework, know what you want, and then ask lots of questions.

Our service-minded facilities have staff available throughout your stay to answer questions and take care of needs you might have during your retreat.

If possible, contact the Site Director to arrange a visit to the 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 give you some insight into how our camp or retreat centers take care of and serves guests. Working with a facility and staff that you know and trust will again 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.

Start early in finding and reserving the retreat facility that meets your needs. Consider reserving a facility six months to a year before you want to have a retreat.

At the end of your retreat event, you are happy with a facility and your event, it is a good idea to make your reservations for the following year before your retreat is over. The sites invite you to initiate a lot of pre-retreat communication within your group and the retreat facility.

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 retreat 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.

**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. Use every opportunity available at the retreat center for the people in your group to enjoy being outdoors. 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.

**Promotion**
Begin promoting your event 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.

**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/Flyer**
There are several things to consider when deciding how much money and effort you want to put into a brochure which describes your event.
- 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 of mind, inspiration, etc.) on your brochure.
- Determine what it is that you are offering (i.e., relaxation, comfort, fulfilling relationships, peace)

The purpose of the brochure is to:

Avoid clutter. Reflect the image of the event and the group sponsoring it. Here are the fundamental ingredients in publishing a brochure:
1. Information
2. Clearly stated
3. Uniquely presented - simple and direct.
4. Publish the schedule—include departure time and return
5. Travel information and directions to site
6. Information about the speaker/s, musician/s, and other program people;
7. A registration form
8. Things to bring (sleeping bag, towels, etc.)

**Other Promotion**
Other forms of promotion: Public Service Announcements, paid advertising in local newspaper, radio stations, 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 camaraderie always pays off.

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. Communicate in a way that will make people want to attend.
3. Tell group members they can invite a friend who’s never attended your group before to come along for half price
4. Invite another group within your organization to come along with you
5. 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.
Sample Letter to Registered Participants

Annual Grace United Methodist Church Men’s Retreat

Date:
Theme: In God’s Time (example)

Dear Friend(s):  

We are so pleased you are going to __________________. We hope it will be a pleasant and rewarding experience. Reservations have been made for you. We hope this will not be necessary, but if you must CANCEL for any reason, PLEASE call the church office (____________), or Retreat Coordinator (____________) as soon as possible as we must make final confirmation of reservations with _________________ by (Day and Date). It will be necessary for you to pay for any reservation made but not used.

The following information may be helpful:

WHAT HAPPENS DURING OUR 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 the group leader. When you get to the site, the group leader will meet with the Site Director, conduct check-in and locate housing and the site director will orient us to the layout of the site and review the required policies and procedures.

8:00 - Communion
9:30 - Introductions to the theme, “In God’s Time”
10:30 - Snack and Fellowship

SATURDAY: 8:00 - Breakfast
9:30 - Devotions
10:00 – In God’s Time? (continued)
12:00 - Lunch
Afternoon free time (try exploring this the site’s trail for a great time of hiking, Fishing in the local ponds or streams, picture taking, napping, recreation....)
4:00 – In God’s Time? (continued)
5:00 - Dinner
7:00 - Campfire, programmed activity, more discussion, Devotions, Snack.

SUNDAY: 8:00 - Breakfast
9:30 - Personal time apart - Read and meditate on Scriptures
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 necessary to met the climate changes for the season of our retreat. (NO formal clothes will be needed)
2. If bedding is not provided bring sleeping bag or sheets and blankets, pillow, towels, soap and basic toiletries.
3. Hiking shoes, camera, or anything else you may want to use for recreation.
4. A flashlight
5. A Bible
6. Any balance due on your registration fee
7. Any snack foods you may want

WHERE WILL WE BE?
Address:
Site Phone Number:

DIRECTIONS:
Evaluation & Follow-up

When creating your own evaluation, phrase your questions in a simple way that will tell you the things you’re most interested in knowing. A sample evaluation is included in this manual. 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 good timing for people to commit themselves to being on the planning team. 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 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 retreat leader.

I attended this retreat because:

What did you learn from this retreat?

What did the speaker say that was helpful to you?

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I felt the program was</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Needs Improved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The accommodations were</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Needs Improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food was</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Needs Improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall my experience this weekend was</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Needs Improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments: (Likes, Dislikes, Add or Change?)

Optional:
Name: _________________________________________________________
Phone: _________________________________________________________
E-mail: _________________________________________________________
## Retreat Leader’s Master Checklist

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

**Costs:**

**Program:**
- Speakers: $________________
- Musician: $________________
- Materials: $________________
- Other: $________________

**Food:**
- Meals, (if providing own food): $________________
- Snacks: $________________
- Meals, (cost per person): $________________
- Other: $________________

**Travel:**
- Speaker: $________________
- Musician: $________________
- Vehicle Rental: $________________
- Other: $________________

**Promotion:**
- Brochures: $________________
- Postage and Mailing: $________________
- Other: $________________
- Misc: $________________

**SUB-TOTAL: $________________**

Divide the Subtotal by Total Number of Retreat Participants.$________________

*Add per person charge of Lodging: $________________

**Your total Charge per Person: $________________**

* Find out from the retreat facility what is or is not covered in their per person 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.
CROWD BREAKERS FOR ANY AGE

These crowd-breakers 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.

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...

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.

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 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.

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”.
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.

WORK RETREAT: Fellowship and work to provide a minimum of 8 hours per day to repair, re-build and/or build on various projects at one of our sites.

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.
TYPES OF RETREATS (cont.)

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.

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 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.

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.

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

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.
In order to help you plan a successful theme-oriented retreat, we can provide program facilitators on the following topics:

**IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING THE THEME INTO A RETREAT**

**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.

**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 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). 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.

**RETREAT 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 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 servant hood.

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.