

Effective Planning for a Weekend Retreat or Lock-In in the Episcopal Church

Step One: Assessing Needs and Interests

If you have done a major needs/interests assessment earlier, you may decide to use that information as the basis for your retreat or lock-in. It may be time, however, to assess needs and interests again simply for this one weekend or overnight event. You may decide to put out a quick survey during Christian education or at one of your weekly evening meetings. Consider putting together a sheet that lists 15 possible topics, 15 different learning methods, 15 main dishes for meals, 15 activities for free time, and 15 videos for late night fun. Your topical list might include: faith issues, dealing with cliques, peace in relationships, falling in and out of love, etc. Your different methods might include: small-group discussion, journaling, questions and answers, listening to a tape, drawing. Your meals might include spaghetti, taco salad, pancakes, and chef's surprise, etc. The lists go on and on. Collect the survey and tally the results. Use the results for your next step.

Step Two: Setting a Goal Statement

After you have collated and prioritized the results of your needs assessment, put together the overall goal statements for your weekend or overnight. You may consider writing at least two goal statements in two categories: community life and study/learning. For instance, your statements might say:

- Community life: (1) We will avoid putdowns the whole weekend and will tell each other when we feel put down. (2) We will all share in responsibilities for meal cooking, cleaning, and setup.
- Study/learning: (1) We will study together and discuss parts of the book of Job, which we've been studying in Sunday school. (2) We will share our concerns and frustrations and create a prayer list so we can support each other in the next year.

Consider printing these goal statements in your publicity and posting the statements in your meeting area during the weekend lock-in or retreat.

Step Three: Designing the Program

Now that you've established your purpose through your goal statements, design how you will meet these goals. Use the following checklist of questions as a guide for designing the program.

1. When will this happen? (Date and time schedule)
2. Where will it happen? (Location)
3. How will we get there? (Transportation)
4. How much will this cost? (Budget)
5. Where will the money come from? (Fund raising)
6. How will we spread the word? (Publicity)
7. What are we going to eat? (Meal planning and preparation)
8. Where are we going to sleep? (Housing)
9. What does each person need to bring? (Sleeping bag, Prayer Book, Bible, etc.)
10. How much time do we have? (Schedule)
11. What resources are needed? (Supplies)
12. What will the program sessions look like?

(Leadership)

13. Who is responsible for each part? (Assign tasks)

By going through each question, you'll be designing your program for the weekend. A retreat checklist is also included to help.

Step Four: Doing the Program

In getting ready to do the program, go through the entire schedule with the planning team. Pay attention to anything that is needed for each item on the schedule. Who is responsible for what? If all the people are doing their jobs, you'll be able to sit back and enjoy the event. Be flexible and ready to help out as needed.

Step Five: Evaluating the Program

Create an evaluation sheet for the participants. Take some time for them to fill the sheet out. A sample form is included. Then, as a planning team, evaluate the weekend and the planning process that preceded it. Ask yourselves: What worked well? What would I have done differently? What did we learn from this process?

Take a moment and be thankful for God's faithfulness in the planning and doing of the event. Save all your work in a file for future retreat planners.

Congratulations! You have completed the planning steps for a weekend retreat or lock-in.