

PLANNING A RETREAT

Our culture today is controlled by calendars, cell phones and clocks making for an accelerated life of 'busyness'. However, it is important to have 'time away' to reflect and renew.

What is a retreat:

- *A time set apart to explore and deepen one's spiritual journey.
- *An opportunity to develop and strengthen community with others.
- *A place of beginnings or renewal or insight.
- *A process that gives rhythm to the life of a journeying Christian.

The key word is process ... a retreat is part of the spiritual life process of becoming the people God intends us to be. This process can happen without a retreat, however, within the circle of a retreat there is a time away from the daily distractions of life that often inhibit our spiritual growth.

What kind of a retreat can I have?

There are as many kinds of retreats as there are people:

*Choosing to increase connections for the men of your church, perhaps you would want a pheasant hunting retreat.

*Choosing to focus on a women's group, perhaps a quilting retreat is more to your need.

*Perhaps your church council needs a time away to plan the year's activities, or the confirmation class needs focus time... anything is possible.

To choose a topic, invite 4 or 5 other people of various life experiences who will agree to mull it over, pray about it and allow the topic to evolve in brainstorming session. When you have decided the topic, this group or design team should provide the framework for the retreat. Choose a **time**, select a **site**, **publicize** the retreat, **recruit** participants, make **nametags**, plan **meals**, prepare any necessary **materials** and decide how you will **evaluate** your experience.

Items to address:

Decide **where** you want to have your retreat and **how long** you will meet.

How many **people** will attend, are there limits in the facility you have chosen? What are the **costs** of the facility? What kind of **format** will you follow? Will you **include** Bible study, worship, discussion, reflective exercises and 'quiet time'? Is there a **specific issue** that you will address? Do you need a guest **facilitator** to guide the group through the issues? How will you **pay** for that person? Will you include **crafts or music**? Who will plan the **meals** and/or serve them? Who will provide **transportation**? What kind of **supplies** will you need? What kind of **follow-up** will the retreat require?

Please choose to take time away. MAKE time to care for your spiritual life and growth.