

Mt. Gilead Bible Camp & Conference Center

Retreat Planning for Rookies

Step 1 Pray

Prayer is probably the most under utilized and under valued resource we Believers have and yet, is the most important thing we can do! When we pray about the various aspects of the retreat planning, we can shift our concerns to the Lord. Here are some things to pray for:

Pray that you would have eyes to see the audience you intend to serve. Pray that you would be attuned to what the Lord wants them to learn and what they are in need of hearing.

Step 2 Decision Making

- Determine the purpose and goal of the retreat
- Consider the size of the group, the gender mix, ages of attendees and any special needs (i.e. dietary, physical, etc.)
- Determine the date of your event (remember renting a facility is often less expensive in the winter months or during the week)
- Create a schedule for the event with details such as: set up times, expected attendance, locations, seating arrangements and special considerations (power point, white boards, etc.)
- Consider transportation needs to the event
- Select and schedule your speaker (most experience speakers plan a year in advance or more)
- Plan recreation needs, group activities and/or team building exercises
- Plan seminar or break out sessions
- Consider menu preferences including snacks or receptions
- Prepare a timeline for producing event promotions, registration and meeting materials.
- Choose a theme for your retreat

Step 3 Budgeting

Create a balance sheet listing expenses for all functional areas of your meeting:

- Staff time
- Marketing expenses
- Written Materials (hand outs)
- Decorations
- Transportation
- Accommodations
- Food and Beverages
- Recreation equipment
- Production costs including: speaker, musicians, sound tech, first aid personnel

- Build in a contingency fund for unanticipated, last-minute expenses

Step 4 Choosing a Location

- Whether you plan a retreat in the mountains, at the beach or in the forest, you will often find people interested in coming to the retreat simply because of the beauty of the surroundings.
- Accessibility: Parking and ease of walking around grounds. Consider the mobility and age of the people you are serving. (Most of Mt. Gilead's facilities are located on the valley floor)
- Facility: Are the grounds clean? Is the staff friendly and helpful? How is the lighting at night? Are there enough meeting rooms for your group? Are the camp policies reasonable? Will our group be the only group on the grounds during our retreat?
- Sleeping Accommodations: Does your group require conventional beds or will be bunk beds be acceptable? Will your group be okay with sleeping bags or do you prefer deluxe accommodations with bedding and towels?
- Recreation: Do you want to have a lot team building activities? Make sure your facilities have the recreational equipment you need and the space you need for your events.
- Wi-Fi: Many camps are located in the woods or mountains where Wi-Fi is limited.
- Customer Support: Will you have access to a copier if you need extra copies, etc.?
- Food Service: Are there specific dietary needs with your group? Do you have attendees with food allergies or preferences? Can the camp chef accommodate those needs?
- Policies: Learn what the policies of the camp are, including COVID policies.

Step 5 Marketing

Getting the word out about your event is important. Here are some tools at your disposal:

- Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat
- Eblasts: Helpful in targeting your specific audience.
- Mailings: Save the Date Postcards/Bookmarks are great tools for getting the word out and for attendee to hand out to their friends
- Church Flyer: The office managers may post flyers, print your info into church bulletins or email them to their congregants.

Miscellaneous Tips

- Keep your Camping Staff in the loop with your needs. It is better to over-communicate than under communicate. They want to serve you well and your information will help them serve you better.
- Email a "What to Bring to Camp" list to your attendees

At the Retreat

- Consider having greeters to direct and assist attendees
- Have maps available for the guests
- Consider have snacks available on arrival
- Consider handing out a retreat evaluation or create an online evaluation



What to Bring to Camp

- Notebook & Pen
- Sleeping bag
- Pillow
- Towel
- Closed-toe shoes (for Climbing Wall, Zip-Line and Goliath Swing)
- Flip flops or sandals
- Modest one-piece swimsuit
- Warm jacket
- Flashlight
- Toiletries
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray

Do Not Bring

- Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs (prescription OK), Matches/Lighters/Fireworks, Weapons