

TO: Retreat coordinators, Conference Presidents/
Advisors

FROM: The Department of Women Ministries

RE: Suggestions and helps for designing a meaningful
Women Ministries Retreat

In this resource:

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Part 3: Setting a faith goal

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The Evangelical Covenant Church
8303 West Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-2941
Ph. 773-907-3332; Fax 773-784-4366
Email: wmc@covchurch.org



Connecting women, impacting our world.

Ruth Y. Hill, Executive Minister

Dear Retreat Organizer,

Greetings and peace to you in Jesus' name! How grateful we are that you will be organizing the women's retreat in your region; we are confident that God gifts those he calls and trust you will experience his guidance and provision in your preparations.

Regional retreats—and Triennials!—are an incredible tool for advancing God's kingdom! Here's why I love this ministry so much:

- Women **come to faith** through messages from godly, carefully chosen speakers;
- Women of faith **deepen their commitment** to Jesus through gifted worship leaders and speakers;
- Women are **set free** from their burdens through opportunities designed to minister to them;
- Women **grow in skills and knowledge** through carefully chosen breakout sessions;
- Women **connect to other women**, forming and deepening relationships that strengthen connections between churches;
- Women **unite to impact their world** through exposure to ministries sponsored by their conference and/or denominational Women Ministries...

...and women have such a great, fun time in a great location!

Did you notice that the first four blessings all depend on discerning the right leaders? This is key to creating the best opportunity possible for an encounter with the living God, creating opportunities for the Holy Spirit to transform lives. I pray that you and your team will give much prayer and thought to this! In these documents you will find one devoted to identifying your goal for the retreat, which then guides you in choosing your speakers.

Please know that both your conference and denominational leaders are eager to assist you in your planning.

Blessings on you.

In Him,

Ruth Y. Hill



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PART 1: Envisioning your retreat.

What is your vision for this retreat? “Vision?” you say.

Yes! Your vision determines everything about your preparation. You may have been handed a fat notebook with step-by-step instructions; someone may have even used these words when inviting you to help plan the retreat, “All you need to do is...” A record of what was done in the past will be very helpful to you. However, more is involved than filling in the blanks with new names!

What do you want to see for this retreat? An even better question is, “What does JESUS want to see for this retreat?”

The answer is your vision!

Here are some possibilities:

- To see women come to faith and others deepen their relationship with the Lord.
- To see women set free from the burdens they are carrying.
- To see women deepen relationships with each other.
- To see women have a stress-free, fun-filled weekend away.

No doubt your vision will involve all the above! But where does your heart gravitate? That is the Holy Spirit speaking to you, drawing out your unique gifts. In fact, you might try and prioritize them.

Once you can answer the question and know your vision for the retreat, you are ready to determine what to do to realize it. See pages 6-7 for a retreat planning template to help determine your vision as well as a place to record important factors concerning the speaker. Once you’ve answered these questions, move on to Part 2.

PART 2: Designing the retreat program.

What programming will enable you to realize your vision?

There are always some givens to a retreat, e.g. meal schedules, how soon it can begin, when it needs to conclude. If there isn't a template already with the givens, you might want to prepare one; then you can see where there is flexibility in the programming to realize your vision. (Complete the template on pages 6-7 before proceeding).

Let's say you have chosen **#1** as your highest priority – to see women come to faith and others deepen their relationship with the Lord. How can you use the schedule to strengthen it? Here are a few suggestions:

- Invite a speaker known for being a great biblical speaker. Someone talking on ways to organize your life would fit better with a different vision.
- Guard the worship times so nothing before or after interrupts or conflicts with a worshipful atmosphere. A retreat chair popped up after a moving altar call and announced where all the great afternoon shopping places were. Bad timing! The worshipful and contemplative moment evaporated!
- Move the fun, zany events in the late evenings to different locations so the worship area can be used after sessions for prayer, etc.
- Choose a title or theme that you repeat throughout your promotion and the actual event to strengthen your vision.
- Offer seminars on topics that deal with spiritual issues.

Let's say you've chosen **#2** as your highest priority –to see women set free from the burdens they are carrying. How can you use the schedule to strengthen it? Here are a few suggestions:

- Invite a biblical speaker who is knowledgeable in women's issues.
- Guard time after messages where women can stay for prayer.
- Arrange for prayer warriors to pray with women.
- Include seminars on topics related to different burdens women have. e.g. abuse, troubled teens, divorce, etc.

Let's say you've chosen **#3** as your highest priority- to see women deepen relationships with each other. How can you use the schedule to strengthen it? Here are a few suggestions:

- Pay attention to your name tags! If they are hanging around someone's waist, people cannot get to know each other! And if they are in a tiny font, same thing. Be sure the first name is in a huge font; other info can be beneath in smaller font.
- Schedule reflection times where friends go off to discuss together reflection questions from the message.
- Watch for those who may be alone.
- Schedule late night cabin talks with get-acquainted questions.
- Create a memorable experience for the women that they will look back on and say, "Remember when we...?" E.g. Fun Run, acting out a nursery rhyme, swimming across a lake, etc.

Let's say you've chosen #4 as your highest priority –to see women have a stress-free, fun-filled weekend away. How can you use the schedule to strengthen it? Here are a few suggestions:

- Themes work well for this type of vision, something entertaining and running through all the planning.
- Hold special events in addition to worship services with an emphasis on fun. Host a pajama party with prizes for the pajamas closest to the theme or most innovative; combine it with a movie night and show a chick flick with free popcorn.
- Offer lots of mixers for people to get to know each other.
- Invite a speaker whose area is networking or developing meaningful, supportive relationships.

PART 3: Set a faith goal.

How many women do you believe will come? This is more important than you think!

One WM retreat was declining; though it had had seen over 200 attending in the past, it was down to about 75 to 78. One member of the retreat committee had a faith goal of 200 women attending that year. The others on the team had serious doubt, but she persuaded them to aim for 200, which meant making a financial commitment to the camp. Because the woman was so convinced that many could and would come, she devoted energy and budget funds to a really strong promotion of the retreat. How many came that year? 201.

Our faith goal:

PART 4: Caring for your speaker.

- **Extend the invitation** far enough in advance to permit adequate preparation.
- **Communicate clearly** the nature of your event, the demographics of the audience and your desires regarding theme and length of presentation.
- Provide a **contact person** who can answer questions about your event and provide the speaker with her phone numbers and an email address for easy communication.
- Let your speaker know there is a **team of people praying** for her. Contact her prior to the event and ask if she has specific prayer needs.
- Arrange for an **appropriate honorarium** prior to the event. Factors influencing the honorarium:
 - a. The type of event: an informal gathering to hear of someone's personal experience requires less preparation than a four part series for a weekend retreat.
 - b. The experience of the speaker: recognize the depth of experience of your speaker.
 - c. The number of women attending the event. A general guideline is \$1 per woman attending the event with a minimum of \$50 for groups less than 50. \$100 for a 45 minute message is normal; for a four-part retreat, \$500 is a minimum with \$1,000 more realistic. Some conferences pay more because they have large attendance.
 - d. Your budget. Work with your speaker. A godly speaker has a desire to minister and may be able to come for an honorarium far less than she normally receives. On the other hand, be generous! Travel expense should not be included with the honorarium.
- Provide all the information she will need to **travel** to your area:
 - a. Provide very clear driving directions or an internet map such as MapQuest or Google Maps.
 - b. Be sure the one picking her up at the airport arrives before she does.
 - c. Provide name and cell phone number of person meeting her at the airport. A description would also be nice!

Arrange **comfortable housing** for her if she will be staying overnight.

- Your speaker will need a quiet, private place where she can both rest and focus on the assignment before her. Do not give her a room mate. Some enjoy staying in people's homes; others require the solitude of a hotel/motel. Discuss this with your speaker at the time of the invitation so expectations are clear.
- If someone will be hosting her in a home, provide her a private bathroom.

At the event:

- Having a designated hostess for your speaker means so much! Your speaker is not familiar with your setting, may have last minute photocopying needs, etc. and knowing who to ask questions of relieves stress.
- Your speaker will greatly appreciate a time of prayer just before the start of the event and each session for a retreat. Arrange for a place where your planning committee or stage people can meet together for prayer.
- Arrange for her speaking needs. If audio-visual equipment is needed, be sure to have what was requested. A backup extension cord and power bar can save the day!
- A glass of water at the podium and a packet of Kleenex may anticipate her needs.
- Do a good sound check before she steps in front of her audience.

After the event:

- Arrange for her return to the airport in a timely manner.
- Be sure her return driving directions are clear.
- If you are mailing her honorarium and travel reimbursement, tell her when she can expect them to arrive.
- All speakers are growing. Hearing an evaluation of their ministry is helpful for further growth. Results of your evaluation form and/or a short note sent after the event with your reflections will be greatly appreciated.

PART 5: Promoting your retreat.

- Do use a good portion of your budget for **quality** promotion. This communicates to those who have never attended that this is a worthwhile event.
- Avoid too many words in a brochure! Less is more.
- Consider identifying a retreat promoter in the different churches you are targeting. Relay updates she can pass on to the women of her church so interest mounts.
- If possible, offer discounted rates for early registration or for ten or more in a group registration.
- Retreats can easily become "Christian entertainment", particularly if the site of the retreat is very accessible to women and they come and go as they like. If women are permitted or encouraged to "pick" what they want to participate in, the atmosphere and mindset needed for a spiritual retreat will be totally lacking. This creates a challenge for your speaker who has prepared messages in a specific sequence leading to a desired result. Few speakers want to be "entertainment" and would not want to speak in that environment. Encourage women to step out of their routines for the entire weekend in order to focus on what the Lord is saying to them.

PART 6: Partnering with the Department of Women Ministries.

Over the years the denominational Women Ministries' Leadership Team has made decisions relating to fall retreats. Below is a list of past decisions for you, our partners, who implement them at women ministry retreats. Your elected team members and your Conference President/Chairs, depend on you for their promotion. Your efforts have a direct effect on strengthening the ministry.

1. **Registration income.** Retreats are one of the strongest ministries Women Ministries offer the Covenant. It was decided in 2004 to add \$2 to each registration with the goal of increasing the financial strength of denominational Women Ministries. You might wish to take a designated offering instead. Successful partnership with this goal requires early implementation before your registration fees are set.
2. **Called & Gifted Seminars.** As you know the Covenant is working vigorously to educate the denomination on the calling and gifting of women as taught in Scripture. The Called & Gifted materials are available through the Covenant on-line bookstore. Plan early so that the C&G seminar is included in your retreat options. Contact the WM office for names of those ready to lead the seminar.
3. **AVA.** Under AVA Director Yvonne DeVaughn's capable leadership, AVA is gaining momentum. There are a large number of women at retreats who have experienced abuse, are in the midst of it or have a loved one suffering. Our retreats need to be a safe haven for them! There is a Regional Coordinator who would love to help you with that! What a gift you could give a victim.
4. **TLC.** The Leadership Connection -created to support local leaders by providing a place to gather annually for encouragement, networking and new resources. Your conference WM Leadership Team and area Ministry Coaches will plan the meeting and just need your partnership to create an ideal time and space for the gathering and to promote it in your retreat brochure.
5. **Friends of Women Ministries.** Friends is an important core of our financial support and your partnership in promoting Friends has a direct impact on our financial strength. I love hearing the different ways you have been promoting Friends! Would you let me know what you are going to try this year? Your idea may spark others around the Covenant!
6. **Spiritual Directors.** Did you know that there are a large number of Covenant women who have been trained as spiritual directors? Contact our offices for names of Spiritual Directors in your area.

RETREAT PLANNING TEMPLATE

THE RETREAT

Retreat Dates: _____ Retreat site: _____

Retreat theme: _____ Scripture theme: _____

To help clarify **your vision** for this retreat, rank the items below.

To see women come to faith and others deepen their relationship with the Lord.

To see women set free from the burdens they are carrying.

To see women deepen relationships with each other.

To see women have a stress-free, fun-filled weekend away.

How many separate presentations will the speaker give and what is the approximate length of each? Indicate expected attendance at each presentation?

THE SPEAKER

Speaker's Name: _____

Address: _____
street City/state zip

Home ph. _____ Work ph. _____ Cell ph. _____

Email: _____ Other: _____

The total honorarium for the speaker (not including reimbursement for travel) \$ _____

Any special requests from the speaker (special diet, etc.) _____

SPEAKER TRANSPORTATION/HOUSING

Transportation: The host is expected to reimburse the speaker for transportation expenses.

- The host will arrange transportation.
- The speaker will arrange her own transportation.
- By land, we will reimburse the speaker's mileage at _____ cents per mile.
- By air, we will reimburse the speaker's airline ticket if purchased a minimum of 3 weeks prior to engagement and not to exceed \$_____

Name of recommended airport: _____

Flight # _____ Airline _____ Time of arrival _____

Name of person meeting the speaker at airport: _____

cell ph. _____ home ph. _____ Email _____

Return: Transportation to the airport provided by: _____

Time of departing flight: _____ Flight # _____ Airline _____

Housing: We will provide a private room for the speaker on the premises off the premises.

AGREEMENT

Signature of person completing this form: _____

Date: _____

address: _____ e-mail address: _____

phone number: _____ cell number: _____

Speaker's signature agreeing to the above arrangements:

Date: _____