

Sample Event

PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES PLANNING RETREAT

A Purpose and Principles Planning Retreat is a one day event intended to involve as many leaders as possible. Others may be invited also so that this is an open event. It can be used by large and small groups. Everyone should bring their Bible.

Leadership for the event and the follow up work could be a specific group called a Leadership Team, a group from the congregation council or some other designated group set up for the purpose of leading this process.

Pre-Retreat Preparation Event (for example, the night before)

Biblical Text: Acts 9:1-9

1. Give each person a piece of paper and crayons.
2. Tell each person to fold their paper in half, giving them 4 sections.
3. Read the text aloud asking the group to listen.
4. After reading the text, give the following question:
 - a. Saul had an encounter with Jesus that changed his life. When did you first encounter Jesus?
 - b. God used Ananias to help bring new life to Saul. Who in your life has God used to bring new life to you?
 - c. God said that Saul had been “a chosen instrument” for God. What purpose does God have for your life?
 - d. God also said that Saul would “suffer” for God. What will you need to give up for your congregation to be transformed?
5. Ask each person to use the crayons to draw a picture that represents the events and people in their lives in response to each of the above questions. Read the first question again and give them 5 minutes to draw, then read the next question and give them 3-5 minutes, etc. (Drawing skills are not a pre-requisite)
6. When everyone has drawn 4 pictures put them into groups of 3-4 people. Each person is invited to take at least 5 minutes to explain their stories using the pictures as object lessons. As each person finishes their story the others in the group are invited to lay hands on the person and pray for them.
7. When the groups are finished return to the large group for singing and a closing prayer.

The Event:

8:30 a.m. Brief hymn, explanation of the purpose for the day, opening prayer.

8:45 Bible Study – Digging into the Book of Acts
60 minutes for study and 30 minutes to report

- A. Divide into groups of 8 or less: Count off by the number of groups needed. Do not let people self group. If possible use a multiple of 3 groups (3, 6, 9 etc.) so that an equal number of groups study each chapter. These will be the work groups for the day.
- B. Give each group one chapter to study. If there are more than 3 groups, give more than one the same chapter to study.
 1. Acts 2
 2. Acts 10
 3. Acts 16
- C. Each group will need to have a scribe to take notes as they discuss the lesson. Read the text (an option is to have someone can read aloud to the group as others follow along) and respond to the following questions. List at least 5-6 responses for each question, taking about 10-12 minutes for each. The facilitator can help keep them on track.
 1. What *did God do* in the chapter you studied?
 2. What *did people of faith do* in the chapter you studied? (for example: prayer, public preaching, etc.)
 3. What key *lessons would you say any church should learn/remember* from this chapter?
- D. Report back to the large group (scribe serves as primary reporter).
 1. Facilitator records all answers on newsprint.
 2. Process each question from all of the groups before moving on to the next question.
 3. Hang the newsprint sheets on the walls around the room for everyone to see.
- E. Close this part of the day with prayer.

10:15 Break

10:30 Purpose Session
(90 minutes total)

- A. Return to the same groups.
- B. Post It Note © Exercise – *This is done in silence. No conversation allowed!*
 1. Give everyone a large post-it note or piece of paper for ‘purpose’.

2. Allow 10 minutes of *silent prayer and reflection* on the morning lessons as people simply wander around the room and reflect and pray as they read the newsprint notes from the previous session.
3. Assign each group space on a wall.
4. Ask each person to write a one sentence purpose statement on the Post It Note © or paper for the congregation using less than 12 words. Use the format: "God's purpose for our congregation is..." and allow no more than 12 *additional* words in each statement.
5. Participants put the notes on each small group's assigned area of the wall *in silence*.
6. Invite the participants to read the notes *in silence* until everyone has read what has been written.
7. In the small groups discuss the statements posted by group members and refine them into one purpose statement to share with all participants.
8. Gather everyone and have the groups share their draft purpose statements with the larger group.
9. Gather written copies of each group's statements for leadership to use after the retreat.

12:00 p.m. Lunch

12:30 p.m. Biblical Guiding Principles

(1 hour and 30 minutes – Participants return to the same groups as the morning.)

- A. Review in the groups the chapter (Acts 2, 10 or 16) that was studied in the morning.
 - a. Look at major events and decisions/choices that people of faith made in the chapter.
 - b. Decide as a group what guiding principles they were using to make those decisions?
 - c. Make a list of all the key principles used by people/communities in the passage. List as many as you can in 30-40 minutes without putting them in any order of importance.
- B. Sort through the guiding principles that were listed and discuss which ones seem to be the most important in the events/action of the passage. Compile a list of the 5 most important principles that the group sees in action.
- C. Bring everyone back together and ask the groups to share with everyone the top 5 guiding principles each compiled. Have 5 different individuals from each group share one principle each.

2:00 Break

2:15 – 3:30 Congregational Guiding Principles

(1 hour and 15 minutes – Participants return to the same groups as before.)

- A. Ask each group to decide on a list of 5 guiding principles for the *congregation*.
- B. Bring everyone together and ask the groups to share the 5 principles they chose.

3:30 Closing Information and Sending Prayer

Explain next steps. (see below)

Thank everyone and send them home with a prayer and blessing.

After the Event:

1. Leadership will take the results of the Bible study reports and the group's purpose and guiding principle statements. Set a meeting for the week following the event to talk about the event and the purpose and principles ideas that the groups suggested that day. In most cases, the majority of what you need will have been articulated during the event.
2. Assign one or two people from leadership to write a draft statement of purpose and principles.
 - A. The purpose statement should be concise, missional and outward in its focus, and contain both God's mission and the congregation's focus as clearly as possible.
 - B. Guiding Principles: These are the principles that are the congregation's ideals, not just the ones present now. In most cases there will be 5 or 6 guiding principles that underlie the hopes of the congregation. Always include number 1 as "Jesus is Lord and Savior." It is a key reminder. Refine, rewrite and combine the list from the groups at the retreat, bring them together, and define 5 or 6 values that your congregation will seek to hold itself accountable to.
3. Re-gather leadership to review and revise the draft statements. Finalize their form for presentation to the congregation for study, discussion and adoption. This part of the process is hard work for leadership. The guiding principles and purpose need to be biblical, contextual and helpful. They will be best when they are short and memorable. It is important not to short change this step.
4. Bring the material to the congregation, usually first to the Council and then after approval to the congregation as a whole. This will happen differently in each setting. The key is to show how the proposed statements and core values were derived from the Biblical work and vision work done by the congregation. Facilitate small group discussions and process the outcomes in *ways appropriate for the particular congregation*). If significant changes are proposed, document them and bring them back to leadership for reflection and editing.
5. When there is a "Final Proposal" and clear ownership of the purpose and principles then approve them. This could be at a congregational meeting or at church council, whichever is appropriate for the context. It is usually best to do this with the largest group possible. The goal is to foster ownership.
6. Use the purpose and principles in ways that celebrate what has been done. Help people remember them and begin to move toward how they can be applied.