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UNBINDING THE FUTURE RETREAT PLAN

*How will you help your church **not** go back to normal after your E-vent? Here is our¹ best suggestion: Plan a Saturday morning for prayer and strategizing for everyone in the church, particularly your normal committees, teams, task-forces, youth group, choir - everybody! Saturday afternoon, key leaders will take what everyone comes up with in the morning and articulate clearly two or three steps you all feel Christ is calling you take as a church in the next year. Hope this plan helps you take your next steps! Blessings, Martha Grace Reese*

Set this date early and communicate it clearly, *before* your E-vent!

Purpose of the *Unbinding the Future Retreat*: to start doing normal church business in an “unbinding” way. Help the E-vent experience translate into everyday life in your church!

Place: Your church’s building (that’s easy, cheap, accessible and *normal*)

Who attends? Time frame?

9:00 - noon for everybody

Lunch for those who can be there

1:00 - 3:00 strategy group who will come up with plan (pastors + whoever makes sense for your church - board, executive committee, futuring team, an ad hoc group of leaders)

Who leads? Pastor or lay leader will provide main leadership for full retreat. Work in the morning will be done in the normal groups that do the work of your church. Whoever normally leads is the leader! It’s business as usual, but just do it in an “unbinding” way!

Room Set-up: Round tables and moveable chairs

¹ Thanks to Bruce Dobyns, a Disciples of Christ pastor in the northern Illinois pilot group. The “let the Spirit pick your working group” idea surfaced during a very fun phone conversation! Anyone else have a great idea??

SCHEDULE

9:00 - 9:15 worship, singing. Let everyone be seated anywhere they want, without designating tables or assignments.

9:15 - 9:30 prayer triads, use exercise on page 129, *Unbinding Your CHURCH* (use this at every church meeting all year)

9:30 - 9:35 *Written Questionnaire:*

put a piece of paper at each place, asking these questions: (give each person 5 minutes to answer them)

Please answer these questions based on your perceptions of the E-vent:

1. How fully did you participate in the E-vent?

- I helped provide leadership or support for it
- I participated fully in a small group
- I went to a group about half the time
- I did a little bit
- Not at all

2. I feel closer to Jesus now

- Yes
- No

3. I am closer to people at church

- Yes
- No

4. I am more comfortable sharing my faith

- Yes
- No

5. In the last month, I have talked about faith issues with people outside the church many times

*(We'd love to hear the results - can you let us know how your people answered?
Send results to Reese@GraceNet.info)*

9:30 people stay in seats. Committee chairs/group leaders stand up and move to edge of room, holding large signs naming their ministry group

*Leader to people: “Remember the day in *Unbinding Your Heart* when we let the Spirit tell us what to do for a whole hour? Okay, we’re going to do that today. Let’s take 5 minutes to each pray silently to ask God which committee/task force/ministry God wants you to work with today. So what if you’ve been on the education committee for 11 years? Ask yourself if you’d like to try something else for just this morning. Ask God where God wants you this morning. (Perhaps committee chairs should stay with **their** groups! :-D)
(Note to Leader: You may end up changing ministry team membership based on this. That could spark enormous creativity.)*

After 5 minutes, people stand up. Committee chairs, with signs, move to their tables, and people go where the Spirit’s told them they get to move!

9:40 -10:30 Working session in ministry groups

With ministry team leader facilitating the discussion, and with a designated secretary to take notes of the discussion, ministry groups work on these three questions:

- What is the big idea you personally, have taken away from the whole Unbinding the Gospel/E-vent experience?
- What are you going to do differently in your own life?
- What advice would you give another congregation planning an E-vent?

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-11:30 Working session in ministry groups (con’t.)

Go back to your ministry group, and think, for that ministry, what God is calling you to do, practically, specifically, now. Take the first 5 minutes to pray in silence and ask God that question. Let people take notes of the prayer, but *ASK GOD! THEN DISCUSS THIS QUESTION:*

- What 1 or 2 specific things do you think Christ wants you to do together this year?

11:30-noon

Each group reports to the whole group a summary of their answers to the 3 questions. Present a written report, give an oral summary to the whole group. *(Please send a copy of the written reports to your coach.*

LUNCH

Planning Group after lunch:

Summarize answers. Pray. Planning group (see description above, but tailor for your church) puts together a summary of the groups' answers to the four questions

Think strategically: are there 1, 2, 3 specific things that you feel Christ is calling you to do as a church? Pray before anyone speaks. Ask God what the main themes are. Ask the Spirit to help you discern a plan for the next year.