

Guide for New Come to Believe Retreats

It is a good thing you are choosing to do – we would like to help you have,

“The Best Retreat Ever.”

Topics Included:

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- Leadership Style
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Choosing a Sponsor/Mentor

One of the greatest supports to a new retreat is having a seasoned retreat leader advocating your success.

Like having a recovery sponsor – you will want to have a retreat sponsor. They have experiences that are invaluable.

If you are able visit two or more retreats and determine which leadership style compliments and challenges your greatness. You will want a mentor you get along well with. You also want a mentor who will be able to freely offer advice; even if it is new to your thinking. They will begin to see things in and around you. A level of trust will need to develop.

It is wise to pick a single mentor as your key go to person. If you get to multiple retreats you will undoubtedly meet many talented leaders. However, it is important to pick a key leader. Other leaders, depending on their availability may be resources for important pieces of your retreat; such as: registration, Sunday ministry, step leadership, etc. If you are fortunate to have this assistance, let them know who your key mentor is.

Leadership Style

There are two main leadership styles that succeed at Came to Believe Retreats. If you are a husband wife team, it will be important that you recognize and support each other's style. Two things for married couples to keep in mind;

- 1) It will be important to decide which person is responsible for which aspects of the retreat. For example; one person may be responsible for registration, interfacing with the camp staff, and keeping the retreat on schedule. While the other person may be responsible for recording, group activity, and the step experience. If so, keep to that.
- 2) If one of the couple is decided to be the key leader, the other person should be careful not to field questions or to intervene and leave the other member out of the loop.

The first is the singularly responsible leader. They are comfortable making the majority of the decisions before and during the retreat. They see and hold the big picture. This type of leader will need to be both organized and affable, a mix of consistent and flexible, while being intuitive and focused. No one person can do

everything a retreat needs. If this is your style, you will still need a team and they will need to know they can trust you *no matter what happens*.

The second is the team builder. They enjoy and thrive in a setting where they and others put together the retreat. They will need to see a big enough picture to set the direction and yet empower the key team members to make decisions that matter. Yet, they will need to be ultimately responsible; while allowing their team to enjoy the success of a great retreat.

Your Team

If you have decided you would like to host a retreat you probably have a couple people you already know want to help. Do your best to assess their strengths. You will find that not everybody who starts with you will continue. A key to a successful team is communication. Do your best to keep communications active and sincere. Let your emerging team know not everything will stay the same. That you count on them and you will do your best to assure their success; even if it means changing things up.

You may be fortunate to have a lot of support from existing retreats. That is cool. However, your long term viability will depend on you developing a local team. If you have outside assistance, ask them to help you identify the talents of your local participants.

Some people will naturally emerge. Some people will want to do a lot. Some can be fully trusted. However, there are others that will need to be discovered. You will want to be vigilant to watch for talents and do your best bring these people into their giftings.

You will need a team. The size of the team and the variety of its members will reflect you. It is important to give your team permission to share their ideas. We want our retreats to be bigger than us. We all grow together.

Remember, you are hosting a recovery retreat. Keep your primary purpose in focus. Remind your team and have them remind each other – “We are here for recovery!”

Why do I want to do this?

As the momentum of the retreat becomes strong; it will be important for you to have a firm understanding why you chose to do this. A few of the reasons are:

- A place for recovery people to discover the spirituality of the “early days”
- A retreat for broken and hurting people to find the solution
- A place for people of faith to discover this amazing “life changing program”
- A place for people to get genuinely healthy

You will want to have your vision for your local retreat firmly planted in your thinking and conversation. When things get tough, and they will, you will be able to access why you are doing this.

The more people you can describe this vision to, the more it will be firmly seated in you. It may change some, however, a clear focus is important.

Commitment to the Program of Recovery

It will be important you are conversant with the program of recovery. Remember, you came into this because you were looking for a better way. Our retreat attendees are arriving because they are looking for a better way. Our program; Alcoholics Anonymous and AlAnon are the reason these people found us. They may also be involved in other recovery areas. We will need to embrace those persons and their history.

We will want to have a strong working knowledge of our program of recovery. A firm knowledge of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is a key. We need to know what is in our books. Where the key principles are located. It will be a successful retreat if those leaving can say something like, “I now see the Big Book in a whole different light!”

Understanding the Legacy of Came to Believe

Our retreats have grown because we tapped into something that worked. You will want to know Clarence’s story. We have a video of one of his last talks. There are also many of his talks available online. Reading Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers will help understand our history. The Legacy Book is rich with information. It will

be good to read it cover to cover. Clarence's sponsees were directly responsible for its content and availability.

The number of persons who had direct contact with Clarence is disappearing. Yet, the spirit of what he stood for is growing. As we discover the "how and why," of these retreats we will be more likely to, "get what they got."

Clarence's Key Principles

- The program and retreat should bring about "a life changing experience"
- If we are fearless and thorough; we can complete steps 1 – 9 once
- Steps 10 -12 are our life maintenance, growth and development program
- We can be truly recovered from the obsession and powerlessness
- It is key that we know the "nature of our wrongs"
- We must be willing for God to remove our defects

Your connection to the recovery world

It is important that you have an ongoing relationship with the recovery world. It is those, "we carry the message" to that will become our retreat attendance. Fliers, internet presence, and other's word of mouth will help bring people to the retreat.

Yet, your personal connection to the A.A., AlAnon, and other recovery venues will ensure your fresh understanding of the "still suffering." We can depend on God and others to help. We find however, that we need to be involved in our personal program of recovery to ensure a healthy retreat.

Resource Commitment

As you begin the process of exploring hosting a retreat you will soon find out it costs. You will need to be ready to face the expense; monetary, personal, and physical resources. Few of us are so situated we can simply pay for everything. As a matter of fact, most of us have found out as we are faithful to this cause, our expenses seem to get covered.

It is important to remember that our retreats should be self-funded. In a short time we should find God blessing the new retreat with the needed revenues.

The following are costs to be considered:

- Retreat center costs – lodging, food, audio visual, coffee, etc.
- Marketing – getting the word out
- Tools at the retreat – Legacy Books, handouts, recordings, etc.
- Record keeping – computer, checking account, registration
- Transportation – getting what you need to the retreat
- Scholarship/sponsorship – getting people to the retreat can't afford it
- Speakers – the cost of bringing in out of town guests

Facility/Venue Choice

Know your area's options. Carefully and prayerfully decide on a facility that best accommodates our folks. You will want a place that makes allowances for smokers. You will need to find a place with big group and break-out group room.

Find a facility with “friendly” hosts. A key to our success is to land at a place that wants us there. Most of the other concerns will be fairly accommodated.

Came to Believe Connections

In our old days we understood the saying, “misery loves company.” You will find in the Came to Believe (CTB) community a team that will be eager to see and help you have, “The Best Retreat Ever.” The varied experiences, strengths, and love will be your greatest asset. We have found the more we can connect the CTB group, the more solid we grow.

You will find in this group life-long friendships, mentoring, and a team excited for your success. Many of these retreats and their leaders can assist with:

- Providing speakers – a great way to connect with the CTB family
- Resources – most retreats were helped in the beginning & they want to help
- A listening ear – sometimes the most valuable asset
- Giving guidance – we all needed help along the line
- The Came to Believe website
- The retreat leader training videos

Speaker Selection

A good section is found in The Legacy Book Appendix Five: Starting Your Own Retreat. This has a detailed description of selecting speakers.

Most of us have found who we have as speakers is a major force behind our success. It is, however, only a piece to a retreat.

Some considerations are:

- Speakers that start speak early in the retreat have a good understanding of the disease; The Obsession, (The mental state that precedes the first drink), The Allergy, and The Spiritual Malady. The “What it Was Like” stage.
- Speakers in the middle of the retreat can clearly spell out “What Happened.” How they, “picked up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at *their* feet.” How they implemented the program coupled with their Christian faith.
- Speakers at the end – Saturday Night – will be able to describe the amazing life this program of recovery brought to them. They should be able to detail; What it was like – what happened – and what they are like now.

Find speakers that will attend the entire retreat. These speakers generally carry talent beyond their speaking. While great speakers may “wow” from the platform. They also carry a message our “one on one” experience values.

Interpersonal Communications

You and your team will have needed to know each other. How to best communicate with each other. How you will communicate at the retreats. An agreed upon method of discussing sensitive information in a private manner.

If it is logistically possible, it will be good to have a meeting room for the leadership. If not, it will be important to have a means to discuss sensitive, emotional, and confidential concerns in a place that others are not privy to.

None of us are fully healed of every trigger that brings on expressive talk. We need to agree as a team how and where we will communicate during the retreat.

Many times a retreat brings up emotionally charged elements within each of us. It is important that we have a plan and place how those communications will be conducted; if it is necessary to have them. Sometimes we will need to wait until

after the retreat to discuss and debrief those concerns. Some things can wait, some things will need to be addressed ASAP.

Group Leaders

Many of us have found that in the group setting people begin to lose fears concerning the whole retreat experience. They hear firsthand from people just like themselves how this retreat made their recovery “real.”

It is important that we pick group leaders that are not focused on hearing themselves. People who love people and the process of a group. People who know where to slow down, where to move things along, and where to encourage a confidential conversation outside of the group.

Leading groups is a great place for leadership development. This must take place under the watchful eye of an already healthy group leader.

The Step Experience

We have found there are three different approach to taking our group through the steps. Each format has value. It will be important for the retreat leader to find an approach that works at their retreat. Sometimes, the facility will dictate the format. Also, the level of training our key volunteers have will help us decide the format. One thing we have all discovered. It is important to have people trained to listen to the newcomers 5th Step.

The three formats are:

- The Speaker – a person versed in the steps who communicates clearly the process
- The Panel – a group of people who take certain pieces of the step and communicate those
- The Group – the steps are taken in a smaller setting with group leaders guiding the step process

Clergy and the Sunday Experience

By this time in the retreat our guests know we are comfortable with Christian roots of our recovery program. Many of our new people have had difficult experiences with church and church people. It is important that if we include clergy that are sensitive to this. Also, that they know at least in an elementary way, our program. We don't want to embarrass them or ourselves with someone who unknowingly speaks contrary to a piece of who we are.

It is important that our guests need to know our Sunday morning service is voluntary. We can encourage their participation; but we should not push it. The same goes with the prayer after the close. It may be well to let someone excuse themselves until a later time.