



A weekend away checklist

For the Organising Team

A30a Articles series: Planning

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This item supplements Article A30, *Take your church away*, and provides a detailed checklist of actions that the Organising Team appointed for the church weekend need to consider. Adapt this list to fit your own event; some items here will not apply. It assumes catering is handled by the Centre, and everything is surrounded by prayer. This list cannot be exhaustive but should help you avoid the danger of forgetting something important.

Actions over a timeline

Two or more years in advance

Church leadership responsibilities

- Decide on purpose, type of event, location, etc.
- Research possible venues, capacities and facilities they offer – perhaps visit some.
- Select and book chosen Centre and pay the deposit.
- Plan for the weekend's organisation and select options.
- Consult with other churches if you have not run such an event before.
- Appoint Organising Team / leader.

Over a year in advance

- Appoint the Organising Team and its leader and fix terms of reference.
- Agree the overall shape of the event and its theme.

- Contact possible speakers (and worship leaders if appropriate) and book.
- Consider arrangements for young people's programme.
- Get the congregation to book the dates.
- Decide on pricing structure and options for payment.
- Produce a detailed budget.

Over six months ahead

- Book leaders for young people's programme.
- Book people to lead any workshops or special sessions.
- Draft the programme.
- Liaise with Centre and check all small print.
- Visit the Centre to see over rooms, check all arrangements, get to know key staff.
- Liaise with speaker and keep in touch with the church's leadership.

- Ditto for young people's leaders.
- Decide on travel arrangements.
- Prepare the publicity material and means of promotion.
- Keep plugging the event to the congregation.
- Arrange for speaker to visit church before the weekend.

About six months ahead

- Publish your publicity and sell the event.
- Take bookings and acknowledge each one with details of names and payments still due. Keep meticulous records.
- Deal with deposits paid by those coming or instalments paid.
- Arrange details of the programme: entertainment, outings, activities
- Plan young people's programme in detail with DBS clearances arranged.
- Go on encouraging bookings.
- Hold a Gift Day if using that means.
- Plan worship and music.
- Plan hosting and other staffing at the event.
- Plan services at church for those not going.
- Hire coach or minibuses as necessary.
- Arrange bookstall and speaker's recommendations.
- Meet with speaker to plan his or her input.
- Prepare risk assessments and cover all aspects of Health and Safety.

At least one month ahead

- Keep in touch with Centre over booking levels (especially if you need to increase the number of places booked or are clearly falling below expectation).
- Promote last minute bookings.
- Chase final payments (or whatever system is in use).
- Pay the Centre if required in advance.
- Arrange the travel.
- Check all technical arrangements for PA, visuals, band, singers, etc.
- Plan any Communion or other service.
- Allocate main session rooms.
- Ask people to 'chair' each session and introduce speaker.

- Ask people to lead discussion or other small groups.
- Make final arrangements for children, teens, crèche and any vulnerable adults.
- Allocate bedrooms and arrange bedroom patrols, cots, etc.
- Allocate workshops and other small groups to rooms.
- Return all necessary forms to the Centre on time.
- Mail all those coming with details – see list below.
- Handle last minute changes in bookings.
- Liaise with all speakers and leaders over last minute arrangements.
- Arrange for day visitors.
- Sort out travel arrangements and lifts.
- Finalise leisure, sports and all-age activities.
- Plan any group photograph at the event.
- Plan any resource area and bookstall.
- Order in speaker's books and other recommendations.
- Have a First Aid rep responsible.
- Check on progress for entertainment, etc.
- Check details of Saturday options.

Final week

- Prepare welcome pack for all those coming.
- Make name badges for all ages with room numbers and groups.
- Check on day visitor arrangements.
- Inform Centre of changes to bookings.
- Copy speakers' handouts or group discussion sheets.
- Prepare PowerPoints for liturgy, speaker's input, etc.
- Buy gifts for speakers.
- Prepare signs – check adhesive restrictions.
- Prepare list of all notices that need to be given out at each session.

On arrival

- Arrive early to form welcome team.
- Prepare seating in rooms and all technical requirements.

- Prepare welcome packs and name badges at reception or on beds.
- Liaise with Centre staff.
- Welcome delegates and man a reception desk with room keys.
- Help people take luggage to rooms.
- Deal with those delayed or arriving late.
- Keep accurate records of who has arrived and who is still to come.
- Look after the speaker and other visitors.
- Arrange for luggage storage if bedrooms not ready on arrival.

During the event: someone responsible for:

- Liaison with Centre and all trouble-shooting.
- Chairing each main session and introducing speaker
- Room availability, tidiness, books, seating, etc.
- All technical matters: PA, band, visuals, equipment
- Bookstall, resources area, cash handling.
- Outings, entertainment, sports, wet weather options.
- Announcements at sessions, day visitors.
- Young people's programme.
- Worship sessions, Communion, prayer times, prayer room.
- Punctuality for meals, etc.
- Short meeting of the Organising Team to assess and adjust as necessary.
- Lost property at the end.
- Saying goodbye to everyone, check lifts all sorted, collect badges and assessments.
- Leaving the Centre only when sure that all equipment etc. is off site and all tidy.

After the event

- Pay all bills not already paid.
- Send letters of thanks and gift tokens to all speakers and leaders.
- Ditto to helpers in various departments.
- Analyse feedback forms.
- Make recordings of sessions available on website.
- Meet with Organising Team to assess event and write report.

- Write up a log of all activity with checklists, sample documents and lessons learned.
- Plan the church's follow-up to the event.
- Hand back responsibility to the church's main decision-making body.
- Recommend another event!

Delegates' mailing and pack

What to include in final details going out a month in advance

- Centre details: address, post code, telephone, WiFi arrangements.
- Travel instructions and map plus post code for satnavs, parking.
- Arrangements for lifts or minibus.
- Suggested clothing/footwear to bring, Bible and notebook, etc.
- Whether sheets, towels, etc. are needed.
- Notification of any need for cash: bookstall, offering, bar, etc.
- Full programme.
- Centre house-rules as required by them.
- Request to notify if any meals to be missed, etc.
- Groups (may be better left until at the event).
- Children's programme and leaders.
- Parental responsibilities.
- Arrangements for babies, corridor patrols, etc.
- List of bookings to date.
- Any pre-event exercise or reading required.

What to include in pack as people arrive

- Welcome letter from host or Organising Team.
- Updated programme.
- Map of Centre showing names of meeting rooms and locations of bedrooms.
- Brochure from Centre if appropriate.
- Leisure activities on offer.
- Any special resources or prayer room or ministry area.
- Names and possibly groups lists.

- Any security arrangements and instructions for parents.
- Arrangements for those with special diets.
- Reminders about need to clear room on final day.
- Reminders about house rules and routines, first aid, late night access, etc.
- Name badge.
- Children (names) asleep in this room (signs).
- Possibly a freebie as a welcome gift.

Working with the Centre

Here is a list of points to watch for in dealings with the Centre you are using.

- 1 All contractual obligations on signing for your booking including payments due in the event of a cancellation or if you fail to fill the minimum number of places you have guaranteed. If the Centre provides an organisers' pack or set of guideline sheets, read them before booking and check them from time to time.
- 2 In particular terms and conditions relating to children and teens with responsible adults, breakages and damage, bringing food or alcohol onto the site, smoking, loss of personal property, first aiders, sales of goods on site, and PAT testing certificates on electrical equipment.
- 3 Your draft programme (including all meal and refreshment times) must follow the Centre's schedules so show it to them before you finalise it. They will ask to see

- the final programme about a month in advance of your visit in any case.
- 4 Dates when all payments become due to ensure you have funds to cover these and do not have to be reminded. Check the payments method requested by the Centre; this may well be BACS.
 - 5 Dates when final numbers have to be given (including day visitors, special diets, meals not taken, etc.), and dates for completed room plans for all delegates, use of main conference areas and all seminar rooms, equipment requirements, etc.
 - 6 Booking for equipment: all PA needs, data projectors, flip charts and pens, sports equipment, Communion vessels, numbers of chairs and tables, etc.
 - 7 Any special arrangements with your insurers or with the Centre regarding third party liabilities or cancellations of any kind. Also arrangements regarding copyright for songs, video clips.
 - 8 Special terms for exclusive use of the Centre. If you have booked a minimum number of places hoping to take more, check regularly that there are still more spaces available. Charges for single occupancy for double or family rooms. Those missing one night.
 - 9 Directions to reach the Centre. Nothing is worse than your people travelling on a dark and wet Friday evening in winter and not being able to locate the car park.
 - 10 Arrangements for arrival (advance party times, bedroom availability) and departure (rooms cleared, etc.).

This link takes you back to the cover page for the main article (A30).

This supplement is available on the website at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Articles-index> then A30a. Please email John (see every page of the website) to suggest additions or other amendments to the points listed.

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of using his consultancy services.

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