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UNBINDING YOUR YEAR OF INVITATION
(FORMER "UNBINDING THE FUTURE" RETREAT PLAN)
A FOUR-HOUR LEADERSHIP PLANNING EVENT FOR AFTER YOUR E-VENT)

Focus:

1. **How will you invite others into the great things God's doing in your church? You're ready for three levels of invitation:**
 - A. *Personal*
 - B. *Church group/committee/team*
 - C. *Whole church*
2. **Begin to familiarize these leaders with the plan for *Unbinding Your Soul* that fits your church best. *Soul*, an invitational small group experience will help you embed prayer, encounters with Scripture, deeper relationships and invitation into your church's culture.**

Who's Involved? *Plan a Saturday morning for everyone in the church to pray and strategize - particularly your normal committees, teams, task forces, youth groups, 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.*

Important Note:

*You've spent a year or more opening the door to invitation through Unbinding the Gospel and your E-vent. Our research shows that if you "take a year to rest," "do something else," and don't move directly into invitation, that all the momentum the Spirit has generated with you will die down. Don't stop now! An organized plan for Invitation and **Unbinding your Soul** will help you build on the base you've created and actually move this momentum out to people who don't have a church home. **Soul** is different than **Gospel** – it's designed for inviting unchurched friends. But it will also help you (a) keep praying and (b) help new people try an experiment in prayer and talking about faith issues. Plan now! You'll love this next year!*

Blessings,

Martha Grace Reese



UNBINDING YOUR YEAR OF INVITATION RETREAT SPECIFICS

Set this date early (about a month after your E-vent) and communicate it clearly, *before* your E-vent!

Purpose of the Retreat: (a) to plan for your Year of Invitation. Start doing normal church business in an “unbinding” way. (You don’t want to go back to “business as usual”!) Make specific plans to move people’s readiness to invite into actual invitation.

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 do it in an “unbinding” way!

Room Set-up: Round tables and moveable chairs



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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: (only if you haven't done this as a congregational survey)*

Give each person 5 minutes to answer the questionnaire attached as the last page of this plan.)
- 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*

*Pastor to people (say this, **and** you can adapt the first paragraph to invite people to the Retreat):*

1. “We’re ready for our ‘Year of Invitation!’ The Spirit plus a lot of great, hard work by [name some of the great leaders] has led us through the E-vent. [Yea!!!] We’ve seen amazing things and heard stories of God changing lives. The Spirit has created momentum, opened a ‘door’ in our church where we can see all those people outside. Right now we are more ready to invite people into a life with Christ and into our church than any of us can remember in years. We’re half-way there. We **want** to invite. But it won’t happen just by wishing. We can’t stop this wonderful process of prayer and study just with ourselves. We’re now ready for our Year of Invitation. We’ve already done some amazing inviting. [Name a couple of examples.] Now, how can we do *more* of that? Prayer will get help us be responsive to the Spirit in the moment, **and** we can help with prayerful specific ideas and action plans: individually, in our teams, and as the whole church. That’s what we’re going to do here today – pray and ask for God’s guidance with some of those plans.

2. “*Unbinding Your Soul* will help us in our Year of Invitation. That’s the small-group ‘backbone’ for our Year of Invitation and we’ll all get a chance to do that [next Lent... next fall]. This is not as involved as the E-vent, - it’s just a small group experience. We’re already comfortable with being part of a small group. We’re comfortable with an Unbinding Prayer

Journal. *Soul* isn't about churches – it's about key themes of our faith journeys *and* it adds invitation. We will each get to invite a friend who doesn't go to a church to be part of that. We'll have opportunities for those of you who want to be part of the leadership to join in [next fall... next Lent]. The small group part of our Year of Invitation is in place. You'll hear more about that later. This morning is about prayer and asking God to inspire some specific ideas to invite some of the people right outside that door to get closer to Christ or to connect with our church. We're going to think of three 'streams' of invitation: individual, for ministry teams, and as a whole church. [For *Soul* planning options, download *Best Practices for Starting the Unbinding Series in Your Church*, from bottom of home page, www.GraceNet.info and talk with your coach.)

3. "Remember the day during the E-vent when we let the Spirit tell us what to do for a whole hour? Okay, we're going to do something equally fun right now! Let's pray silently for 3 minutes. Ask God which committee/task force/ministry team 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 team/committee leaders should stay with *their* groups!)
(*Note to Leader: You may end up changing ministry team membership based on this after today. That could spark a little bit of chaos, and an enormous amount of creativity!*)

Pray. After 3 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!

9:45 -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 in your own life to keep the prayer/Scripture/faith-sharing momentum going?

10:30-10:40 Break

10:40-11:30 Working session in ministry groups (con't.) Make sure each group has a recorder.

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. Give people 3x5 cards for note-taking during prayer. *ASK GOD! THEN DISCUSS THIS QUESTION:*

What 2 or 3 specific things might Christ be nudging you to do together as a team this year?
(*At least one of these ideas must involve some kind of invitation* – how can you include some people not involved in the church? This is easy for mission groups. Finance

committee – you may have to get creative, but what about an outreach to friends of the congregation or at the high school ... a class on money-management/saving/giving?)

- What will you need to **stop** doing in order to free up time to do what you feel Christ is calling you to do?
- What will you do to keep the prayer momentum in your meetings? Will you covenant to open meetings with prayer triads (p. 129, *Unb. Your Church*)? Some other spiritual discipline?

11:30-11:50

Each group reports to the whole group a summary of their answers. Present a written report, give a short oral summary to the whole group. (*Please send a copy of the written reports to your Unbinding the Gospel Project coach.*)

Pray in your groups for those you (individually, in your team, and as the whole church) can reach this year, and for your openness to follow Christ to do your part.

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 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 in two areas:

- a. Practical ministry initiatives?
- b. Practical steps to help embed your prayer/Scripture/sharing momentum in your church's habits?
- c. Practical plans for invitation?

Pray. Ask the Spirit to help you discern a plan for the next year.

Reduce plan to writing. Over the next week, review and pray about it. A week later, finalize the plan and distribute it to each functional group in the church and the whole membership.

UNBINDING SURVEY

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

6. What's the best thing that came out of this time?

Date Completed _____

(We'd love to hear the results. Send copies of surveys to Ellie Campbell, 425 Manor House Road, Glasgow, KY 42141. If you have questions, her e-mail is ECampbell@GraceNet.info, phone 270.678.1864.)