

RURAL MISSIONS

RETREAT



A SIMPLE GUIDE TO HELP YOU EXPLORE
RETREATS



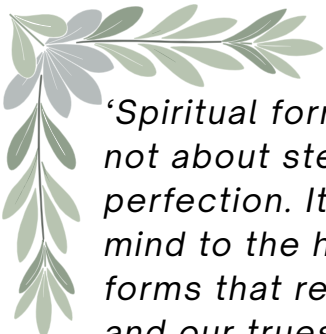
*HELPING RURAL CHURCHES THINK AND
BE MORE MISSIONAL*

Rural Missions is dedicated to equipping disciples of Christ to share God's mission within their local communities. We recognize the importance of pausing, reflecting, and resetting. This guide is designed to encourage you to take time for retreat, offering different approaches to help you realign yourself with God and step forward in mission for His glory.

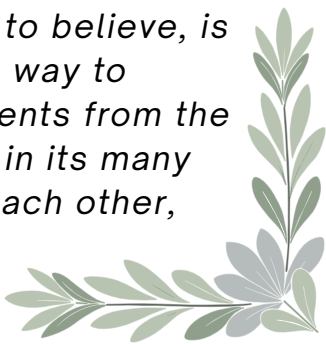
I wonder... when was the last time you went on a retreat? For some, a retreat may sound like something for the "professional Christian," but the truth is retreats are for everyone. They are moments where we step aside from the busyness of everyday life and create space to encounter God afresh. A retreat doesn't have to be far away or long in duration, it could be an afternoon in a quiet place, a walk with intentional prayer, or a guided time away with others. The important thing is pausing, listening, and allowing God to renew us and speak to us.

In order to do mission well, a time of retreat helps us keep our vision Christ-centered and our steps aligned with the will of God. Most importantly, it reminds us that we do not go in our own strength, but in His.

Whether you have been on retreats multiple times or exploring it for the first time, may this guide be a blessing to your ministry.



'Spiritual formation, I have come to believe, is not about steps or stages on the way to perfection. It's about the movements from the mind to the heart through prayer in its many forms that reunite us with God, each other, and our truest selves.'



Henri Nouwen



**WHY SHOULD I
RETREAT?**

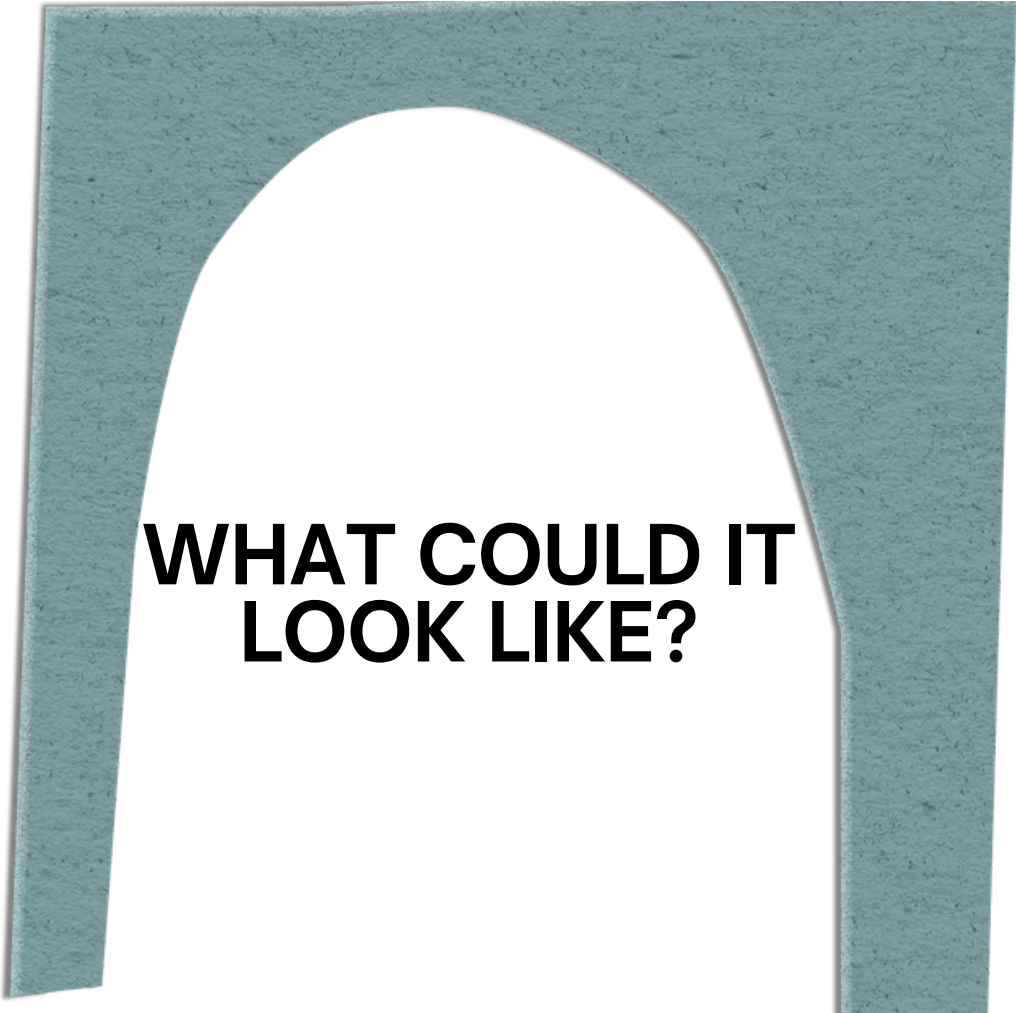
WHY SHOULD I RETREAT?

Our lives can often become busy, consumed by the rhythms of family, work, hobbies, and church. We can feel like well-trained engines, following routines and striving to fulfil our roles and responsibilities. For some, schedules are carefully planned, and we may find ourselves carrying the weight in our own strength rather than relying on God's. Psalm 46:10 reminds us, "Be still, and know that I am God." God invites us to come to Him, and retreats are intentional pauses in our lives where we can surrender before Him. They allow us to return to God with intimacy and dependence, creating space for restoration and renewal.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus often withdrawing to be alone with the Father, seeking solitude and prayer. Retreats offer us the opportunity to follow His example, to stop, be present, and tune in to what God is saying for our lives, our church, and the ministry of His kingdom. This practice has been embraced for centuries, helping countless Christians draw closer to God, find rest for their souls, and gain fresh perspective.

Time away with God allows us to reflect on our priorities, purpose, and calling. It helps us step back from routines and see life through God's lens, aligning our plans with His mission. Ultimately, our purpose in life is not merely to be busy, but to be faithful disciples of Christ. Retreats are a way where we reconnect with God and also ourselves.

A retreat, then, is not an escape from real life, but a return to what is most real. God's presence and calling in our lives. It is an act of trust, laying down our busyness to be still before Him. When we retreat, we create room for God to restore, renew, and reorient us so that we can return to our daily lives with fresh vision, deeper dependence on Him, and a heart that beats in step with His. Far from being a luxury, retreating is a vital rhythm for every disciple who longs to live faithfully in the fullness of God's mission.



**WHAT COULD IT
LOOK LIKE?**

WHAT SHALL I DO?

There is no “right” way to retreat. Some people prefer solitude, while others value going with friends or members of their church community. A retreat might include prayer, reading Scripture, journaling, worship, silence, walking, or simply resting. The goal is not to achieve something but to create space to encounter God. There are so many different options to retreat and we have curated a list to be able to help you explore what it could look like to find a retreat what retreat suits you.

Traditional Preach Retreat

A traditional preached retreat is held in silence, with daily talks from a leader and the rest of the time dedicated to prayer and reflection. This spiritual exercise allows you to disconnect from the world and intentionally deepen your connection with the divine. It's a chance to switch off your phone and spend time fully in God's presence. Don't rush yourself into it and allow the retreat to be a gentle flow of quiet. It might be helpful to intentionally wind down a few days before and after, to help you make the most of the experience. There are places which offer days and overnight stays with different durations.

Themed Retreats

On theme retreats you will be part of a group sharing a particular kind of creative activity, such as painting, clay work, walking or circle dancing, and bringing this activity and your own responses to it into your prayer. Interests related to the spiritual journey may be explored further in workshops, which will involve teaching and exercises. This helps you connect with yourself through body, mind and spirit. You may want to do something you already enjoy doing or doing something you have never done before.

Benedictine Retreats and Lectio Divina

Benedictine spirituality is rooted in the Rule of St Benedict, which emphasises prayer, silence, community, and balance. Retreats in Benedictine settings often follow the daily rhythm of the monastic community, giving retreatants the chance to join in the Divine Office, enjoy periods of silence, and spend time in personal prayer.

A key practice in this tradition is Lectio Divina (“holy reading”), an ancient way of prayerfully reading Scripture. Rather than studying the text for information, Lectio Divina invites you to listen deeply with the heart—reading slowly, reflecting, and allowing God’s word to speak personally into your life. This simple but profound practice can be used both on retreat and at home, offering a way of staying rooted in God’s presence in everyday life.

Open Door Retreat

It is not always possible to go away to one of the many beautiful retreat centres across the country. Yet each of us needs space to pause, to reflect on our relationship with God, our experiences, and the people in our lives. As Dag Hammarskjöld once wrote, “An unreflected life is a wasted life.”

The Open Door Retreat offers a way of making space for this essential reflection within everyday life. It combines times of personal prayer with opportunities to meet with others, providing a balance of solitude and community.

This approach was first developed in 1980 by two Sisters of the Cenacle Community, responding to a growing need for prayerful renewal in the UK. Its name comes from the promise of Jesus in Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I am standing at the door knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share his meal side by side with him.”

Ignatian – The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius

The Spiritual Exercises were created in the sixteenth century by St Ignatius Loyola as a structured way of making a retreat. Rather than being a book to read for inspiration, Ignatius intended his Exercises to be a practical handbook, offering a series of scripture-based meditations and contemplations, guided step by step.

Ignatius believed that this journey unfolds best when taken slowly, with time and space for prayer, and with the support of a guide. Retreatants are encouraged to move at their own pace, without pressure, allowing God to speak deeply in their hearts.

Today, there are many ways of experiencing Ignatian spirituality through shorter retreats. However, the full Spiritual Exercises continue to be offered in two main forms:

- In Everyday Life (known as the Nineteenth Annotation Retreat): spread out over several months, alongside daily responsibilities.
- In a Residential Setting: as a closed retreat, set apart from everyday commitments, usually at a retreat house. Both Roman Catholic and Anglican centres offer these opportunities.

Whichever form you choose, the Ignatian tradition offers a tried and trusted pathway to deepen prayer, grow in spiritual freedom, and discover God's direction for your life.

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PRACTICAL TIPS ON RETREATS

Retreats look different for everyone and it is tailored to each of our individual needs. Here is a list of questions which will help you plan and think through your retreat so you can get the best out of it.

Questions:

Time:

- When could I realistically plan a retreat in?
- How long could the retreat be?
- Who do I need to speak to, to make this happen?

Place:

- Where could I go that would allow me to step away from normal routines?
- Do I need silence and solitude, or do I benefit more from being with others?
- What setting helps me feel rested and attentive to God – countryside, coast, city, or home?

Resources

- What budget do I have available for a retreat?
- Could I use free or low-cost spaces (a church, friend's house, outdoor space) if funds are tight?
- Do I need structured guidance (like the ones suggested) or am I comfortable self-directing?

Focus

- What do I most need from a retreat right now – rest, renewal, clarity, healing, listening?
- How will I prepare myself spiritually, mentally, and practically to enter retreat well?

