

# EMMAUS PILGRIM SPONSORSHIP

## WHAT IS SPONSORSHIP?

Good *sponsorship* is vital to the integrity of Emmaus. Many communities take *sponsorship* for granted; they assume that everyone knows the how and why of *sponsorship*. Yet *sponsorship* is the most important job in Emmaus. It is more than just “signing up people”. The quality of *sponsorship* influences the pilgrim, the health of the Emmaus Movement, and the church affected by the movement. First, good *sponsorship* is your first act of agape before a Walk ever begins; the experience of the Walk for a pilgrim really starts with how we handle *sponsorship*. Second, good *sponsorship* undergirds the whole weekend with sacrificial, agape love on behalf of each pilgrim. Sponsors use discernment in recruiting pilgrims, embody the personal commitment of the community to each pilgrim, and provide personal acts of agape during the three days for the pilgrims. These acts of agape include prayer, agape letters, their presence at Send off, Candlelight and Closing, and follow-up. Third, good *sponsorship* is the foundation for a healthy, effective Emmaus movement that is fulfilling its true purpose – which is - the Development of Christian leaders and the renewal of the church in ministry. The strength of any Emmaus community is a direct result of its recruiting practices. If the community is committed to recruiting strong church leaders for the purpose of strengthening the local church, then the community will be a strong, vital force in the renewal movement. If, on the other hand, the Walk to Emmaus is looked upon as a hospital where every human ill can be cured, it will have a weakening effect on the entire community.

## WHY DO WE SPONSOR?

The aim of a sponsor should not be to “get all my friends to go”, to fill up the weekend, to fix people's problems, or to reproduce one's own religious experience in others. Rather, the aim of the sponsor is to bring spiritual revitalization to Christians who, in turn, will bring new life and vision to the work of the church in their congregation, home, workplace, and community. The aim of *sponsorship* is to build up the Body of Christ.

## WHOM DO WE SPONSOR?

One's awareness of and commitment to the purpose of Emmaus influences who is *sponsored* and how they are *sponsored*. Emmaus is for active Christians and members of churches whose own renewal will mean new energy, commitment, and vision in the church and everyday environments for Christ's sake. There are several qualities a prospective pilgrim should possess. First, the person should already be on a pilgrimage, willing to grow and move forward in their journey of faith. Second, the person should have a Christian passion. The pilgrim knows God can make and has made a difference in their life.

Third, the person isn't so consumed by life's circumstances that they are unable to give full attention to the message and experience of Emmaus. Those *sponsored* could include the following:

- Church leaders (pastors and laypersons) who will bring new vision, commitment, and understanding back to their congregations and who need the renewal and grace Emmaus channels.
- Dependable church members who are the quiet backbone of the church.
- Less active members who need their awareness of grace rekindled and their commitments renewed.
- Christians who are hungry for “something more” and who want to grow spiritually;
- Laypersons and clergypersons whose participation, support, and leadership will encourage others to attend the Walk and will build a sound, balanced leadership base for the movement in the community.
- Members of diverse congregations, denominations, and ethnic groups.

SUMMATION: Emmaus is right for many people - but not for everyone. The religious background or emotional condition of some people may make Emmaus an improper discipleship tool for them. Others may be unsuitable for *sponsorship* because of the negative effect they might have on an Emmaus weekend or the divisive influence they might bring to the church. Sponsorship requires sensitivity to these factors. Some examples of questionable *sponsorship* are as follows:

- ❖ Non-Christians.
- ❖ Christians whose theology and/or practice is notably different or incompatible with the traditional theology and practice represented by The Walk to Emmaus.
- ❖ Persons undergoing an emotional crisis (for example, family breakup, job loss, severe grief) or who are psychologically unstable.
- ❖ “Church-hoppers” – those who always have an axe to grind against the church.
- ❖ Persons who will use Emmaus as a tool to divide the body, to further their own theological agendas, or who will create an “Emmaus church”.
- ❖ Persons who are always looking for another spiritual high or another experience to help them “arrive”.
- ❖ Persons who decide not to attend a Walk after being presented the opportunity.

A potential sponsor need not feel like a failure if a prospect says no. Perhaps the timing is not right. Perhaps God will renew the person in another way.

Remember that the Walk to Emmaus is not for everyone. These three days cannot rectify every problem marriage, enthuse every disenchanting church member, change disturbed persons, or make saints of sinners. The Walk to Emmaus is designed to change environments through Christian leaders. Pilgrims should at least know where the path is, if they are not already walking it. We don't need just any candidates, we need the best...

### HOW DO WE SPONSOR?

- Pray for the person's openness to God's call to discipleship, not for how to get him or her to go on a Walk.
- Extend an invitation. Invite the person to attend for the sake of a more vital relationship with Jesus Christ, not just an event to go to. Share your faith; explain the basic elements of the Walk, its purpose, and follow-up dimensions, which help us live in grace for the rest of our lives. Take the attitude that you are offering the person a wonderful gift rather than that they need to go. If the person is married, speak with both partners and encourage an equal commitment by both. It is better if both husband and wife make the decision together.
- Give your prospective pilgrim(s) an application. Request that the person prayerfully consider the offer of the opportunity to attend the Emmaus event. Pray while you await their response. God's timing and ways are perfect and He will direct the person's response to your offer. Ask the person to make a commitment by filling out the registration form. ALL parts of the application must be completed and signed.
- Continue to pray for your prospective pilgrim. Once the pilgrim has been assigned to a Walk, begin to prepare agape letters and enlist the support of their pastor. Collect personal agape letters from spouse, family, pastor, and close friends. Please try to make sure that your pilgrim's agape letters are properly addressed. It is helpful to make sure the letter writer is identified in the upper left corner of the envelope using the terms *spouse, son, daughter, brother, sister, mother, father*, etc. rather than just “family”. The reason for this is because the number of letters handed out on Sunday is limited and it is most important to be able to easily identify immediate family letters. If they receive more than ten letters, the rest are given to the pilgrim in their closing packet. Do not send personal agape gifts for the pilgrim to be delivered during the weekend. Pilgrims are not allowed to receive individual agape gifts during the weekend.

- Support the Walk through your *participation* in the 72-Hour Prayer Vigil and your *presence* at Sendoff, Candlelight and Closing. Support the pilgrim's family by house-sitting, baby-sitting, feeding pets, watering plants, or just checking in with a spouse to see if any help is needed. For this reason it is best not to sponsor more than one or two pilgrims at a time.
- Encourage the pilgrim in his or her Fourth Day involvement. Talk to them about their weekend experience. Help the pilgrim find or start a reunion group. Take the pilgrim to the first Gathering after their Walk. You could even offer to baby-sit so your pilgrim can attend a Candlelight.
- Help the pilgrim re-enter their church and consider ways to act out new commitment and enthusiasm.
- Inform the pilgrim about ways to serve the Emmaus community on future Walks, creating agape and writing letters to other pilgrims.
- Help the pilgrim understand how to sponsor others.
- REMEMBER – SPONSORSHIP IS FOR A LIFETIME!

### **WHO CAN SPONSOR?**

Any persons who have participated in Emmaus can sponsor another person to an Emmaus Walk so long as they understand the aim and responsibilities of *sponsorship*, have attended a Sponsorship Training Session, and can fulfill these obligations for the person they would sponsor. Persons who have participated in Chrysalis can also sponsor adults to Emmaus under the same conditions. Sponsors should not serve as team members on Walks with persons they are sponsoring. If you decide to serve on the team, you should find another person to serve as sponsor. Sponsors must be able to fulfill the responsibilities of *sponsorship* as a priority over serving on the team. Combining the roles of team member and sponsor in one's relationship with a pilgrim diminishes the value of both roles.

### **WHAT SHOULD I TELL MY PILGRIM?**

While a pilgrim may not know what questions to ask, you do not need to tell them everything that will occur during the three days. However, keep in mind there are *no* secrets! Saying to a pilgrim that you can't tell them anything about the Walk potentially creates unnecessary suspicion and anxiety. And for clergy and staff leadership, this posture often builds a wall of division that results in an "us vs. them" mentality against the Emmaus community. There is no reason to shroud the event in secrecy. This practice has probably done more harm to the movement than people realize. You can share many things about Emmaus without revealing some of the unique and meaningful experiences such as Candlelight or agape letters. Here are some suggested items to cover with a pilgrim.

- ✓ There are fifteen presentations (five each day) dealing with subjects like setting priorities, serving God in everyday situations, how to be a disciple, and how to persevere in faith. Encourage note taking.
- ✓ There is time spent in discussing these presentations.
- ✓ Time is spent in the chapel meditating and praying.
- ✓ Communion is emphasized.
- ✓ There is plenty of good food and fellowship.
- ✓ Discuss sleeping and showering arrangements with your pilgrim. A list of suggested items to bring is included with the pilgrim's assignment letter.
- ✓ No contact with family or business is expected except, of course, for emergencies.
- ✓ Tell how each weekend is unique, but each person seems to find exactly what God wants that person to experience. Don't try to prejudge what a person's needs are or what someone will get out of the Walk to Emmaus. Simply tell your own story. There are *no* expected results other than experiencing God's love.
- ✓ Tell your pilgrim not to anticipate what is coming next.

## THE APPLICATION

- ALL parts of the application must be completed and signed. Read the “Sponsor Information” section of the application carefully and prayerfully consider your responsibility as a sponsor before signing your name.
- Incomplete applications cannot be processed.
- Applications should be mailed or faxed to the NorthEast New Mexico Emmaus Community Registrar preferably by the sponsor. The sponsor should do all communication with Registration regarding a pilgrim unless circumstances dictate otherwise.
- Refund policy – if a pilgrim cannot attend a Walk, they are automatically rescheduled on the next NorthEast Emmaus Community Walk of their gender. If they fail to attend the next Walk, their fees are refunded one-hundred percent. After that, a new application for this pilgrim must be submitted to the Registrar in order for the pilgrim to attend.

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- The Upper Room website at <http://www.upperroom.org/emmaus/>.
- **DAY FOUR: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey** (especially Chapters 7 and 8) by Robert Wood & Marie Livingston Roy
- **THE UPPER ROOM HANDBOOK ON EMMAUS, 2nd Edition** by Stephen Bryant & Richard Gilmore
- The Emmaus Library series **SPONSORSHIP** by Richard & Janine (available through The Upper Room website)
- The Emmaus Library series **WHAT IS EMMAUS?** by Stephen Bryant (available through The Upper Room website)

# EMMAUS SPONSOR'S CHECKLIST

## BEFORE ASKING A PILGRIM

**Pray** and follow God's leading before asking anyone to attend an **Emmaus** walk.

Follow guidelines on who (a Christian, active member in church) should attend an **Emmaus** weekend.

## BEFORE THE WEEKEND

- Did I read the acknowledgement letter from the Registrar?
- Did I explain the spiritual nature of the **Walk to Emmaus** (it is for spiritual Christian renewal; there are no secrets – only surprises) and answer any questions the pilgrim should have about the weekend?
- Did I contact relatives and friends of the pilgrim for personal agape letters?
- Did I arrange to drive my pilgrim to the **Walk to Emmaus** weekend site?
- Did I arrange to take my pilgrim to dinner or ensure he/she has eaten before departing for the weekend?
- Did I inform my pilgrim of the necessary bedding, toiletries, medications, etc?
- Have I ensured my pilgrim's family has my phone number if they have any needs during the weekend?

## DURING THE WEEKEND

- **Pray!**
- Attend **Sponsor's Hour**.
- Attend **Candlelight**.
- Attend **Closing**.

## AFTER THE WEEKEND

- Did I plan to take my pilgrim out to supper before returning him/her home?
- Did I plan to attend the reunion gathering and encourage my pilgrim to do so?
- Did I remind my pilgrim to read through all the information in his/her **Fourth Day** packet?
- Did I assist my pilgrim in finding a **reunion group**?
- Did I remind my pilgrim of any **Fourth Day Workshops** or **Walk to Emmaus** events on the calendar so they may be able to sponsor someone or be on a team?
- **Continue to Pray after the weekend!**
- **SPONSORSHIP IS FOR A LIFETIME**