

# Sponsorship

(Source: Emmaus Ministries Community Manual available from Upper Room Books)

Many Communities take sponsorship for granted and assume that everyone knows the how and why of sponsorship. Most of us sponsor in the way we were sponsored. Many times we discuss sponsorship in regard to the number of participants signed up. BUT, good sponsorship is a lot more than that.

## SPONSORSHIP TRAINING

With the prolonged break in Emmaus Walks due to COVID-19, every cluster is encouraged to dedicate a cluster meeting to sponsorship training prior to the resuming of Walks, whether it be in August 2021, or January 2022. The Cluster Sponsorship Contact person could organize this with the help of Cluster Leadership.

In addition, Sponsorship workshops can be held from time to time at monthly meetings.

Resources for Sponsorship Training available from Upper Room Books:

1. Day Four: The Pilgrim continues Journey: This booklet contains a chapter on sponsorship which provides excellent discussion starters for every Community. It also has excellent lists of:
  - a. Things you MUST tell a Pilgrim
  - b. Things you Will Want to tell a Pilgrim
  - c. Things you May Want to tell a Pilgrim
  - d. Things you You Not Want to tell a Pilgrim
2. Sponsorship: This booklet gives a detailed explanation of the whys, when, and hows of effective sponsorship.
3. Emmaus invitation brochure. Good to give potential participant before or with application.
4. Sponsor Letter: Sent to sponsor when participant is scheduled for a Walk.
5. The following abbreviated talk outline reviews sponsorship. Cluster leaders may use this outline as a starting point for a whole presentation or in parts as a series.

## I. Sponsorship: The Most Important Job of All

Most Communities take sponsorship for granted and assume that everyone knows the how and why of sponsorship. Most of us sponsor in the way we were sponsored. Many times we discuss sponsorship in regard to the number of participants signed up. Yet, sponsorship is the most important job in Emmaus, and all members take responsibility for this area of ministry. It involves more than signing up people. The Community leaders cannot overemphasize the significance of educating its Community about good sponsorship. The quality of sponsorship influences the participants, the health of the Emmaus movement, and the churches affected by the movement.

## II. Good Sponsorship:

- Uses discernment inviting or recruiting participants. Good sponsors do not set out simply to recruit anyone with a willingness to attend.
- Is the first act of agape before the event begins: a participant's experience of his/her Emmaus event begins with how the Community handles sponsorship.
- Undergirds the Emmaus Ministries event with sacrificial love on behalf of each participant. Sponsors embody the personal commitment of the Community to each participant and

provide personal acts of agape during the event for the participants. Those acts of agape include prayer, agape letters, supportive presence at Candlelight, Closing and Follow-Up.

- Offers a strong link to the participants' Fourth Day experience after each event. Sponsors stand ready to answer participants' questions, be faithful friends, and provide perspective. Sponsors guide participants to reunion groups, encourage them to revitalize their involvement in their churches and church groups, and help them sponsor others to attend an Emmaus Ministries event.
- Grounds a healthy, effective Emmaus movement that fulfills its true purpose: continued faith formation of the participants, the development of Christian leaders, and the renewal of the church in ministry.

### **III. Why to we sponsor? What is our aim?**

A sponsor does not aim to "get all my friends to go," to fill up the event roster, to fix people's problems, or to reproduce their religious experience to others. The sponsor aims to bring spiritual revitalization to Christians who, in turn, will bring new life and vision to the work of the church in their congregations, home, schools, workplaces, and Communities. Sponsorship supports the church's efforts to help Christians, young and old to grow spiritually-to build up the body of Christ. Sponsors need to evaluate their motive for sponsoring to ensure consistency with this aim.

### **IV. Age of Participants**

The Walk to Emmaus is for adults eighteen and older who are more established in a local church. The Walk to Emmaus seeks to inspire, challenge, and equip adult leaders for Christian action in their homes, workplaces and communities. (There are spiritual formation and renewal programs for several different life stages. Information about Chrysalis, Journey to the Table and Face to Face is available through Upper Room).

### **V. Whom do we sponsor?**

Community members' awareness of and commitment to the purpose of Emmaus influences whom they choose to sponsor and how they sponsor.

The Walk to Emmaus is for active Christians and church members whose personal renewal will bring fresh energy, commitment, and vision to the church and everyday environments for Christ's sake.

Those sponsored could include the following:

- Church leaders (pastors and laypersons) who will bring new vision, commitment and understanding to their congregations and who need the renewal and grace that Emmaus channels;
- Dependable church members who serve as the quiet backbone of the church;
- Less active members who need their awareness of grace rekindled and their commitments renewed;
- Christians who hunger for "something more" and who want to grow spiritually;
- Members and leaders who represent a cross section of the church and will help Emmaus remain theologically sound, centered on the essentials of common faith and open to different perspectives;
- Other respected laypersons and clergypersons whose participation, support and leadership will encourage others to attend an Emmaus Ministries event and will build a sound, balanced leadership base for the movement in the community; and
- Members of diverse congregations, denominations, and ethnic groups.

An Emmaus event is right for many people – but not for everyone. The religious background or emotional condition of some people may make Emmaus an unwise discipleship tool for them. Other persons lack suitability for sponsorship to an Emmaus event because of the negative impact they could bring to the church. Sponsorship requires sensitivity to these factors. Some examples of questionable sponsorship are these:

- Non-Christians or persons with no interest in the Christian faith or the church.
- Christians whose theology and/or practice notably differs from the traditional theology and practice represented by Emmaus. This includes Christians who have specific dietary restrictions and Sabbath celebrations that the Emmaus experience cannot provide,
- Members of groups who will feel a need to defend the uniqueness of their beliefs throughout the event, and persons who do not share belief in traditional doctrines of the faith basic to the major denominations of the church and to Emmaus Ministries.
- Persons going through an emotional crisis (for example, family breakup, job loss, severe grief) who are psychologically unstable.
- Persons whose behavior is to disrupt. Sponsors require assurance that the people they sponsor want to attend for the right reasons.
- Persons whose family members do not want them to participate. Sponsors do not allow the Emmaus experience to become a point of division between a person and a spouse.
- Persons who decide not to attend an Emmaus 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, the Emmaus experience is not every Christian's way to renewal.
- "Church-hoppers," members who frequently have an axe to grind with 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 seeking another spiritual high or experience to help them "arrive."

## **VI. Two Kinds of Sponsorship: Wise and Unwise**

Wise Sponsorship is purposeful and prayerful; unwise sponsorship is haphazard and undiscerning. Wise sponsorship eventually will produce a balanced, theologically centered movement of the Holy Spirit, which is integrated into the life of the church in the community, and which is honored by a variety of churches as an effective instrument for conveying God's grace, the call to committed discipleship, and our unity in Christ.

Unwise sponsorship eventually will produce a harvest that becomes more a burden than a blessing for the church; a movement that had become a religious fringe group or a parachurch apart from the established church in the community. At best, such groups benefit the individuals involved, having no impact upon or relationship with the churches in the community, thus forfeiting the purpose of the Emmaus movement. At worst, such groups benefit themselves at the expense of the church, breeding division instead of unity within the body of Christ and intolerance instead of tolerance among Christians of different religious expressions.

## **VII. How do we Sponsor?**

The Emmaus Sponsorship book contains a chapter on "**Responsibilities of the Sponsor.**" (That chapter elaborates on the following steps in sponsoring a prospective participant and would be helpful in a training session. Please pay attention to the last section of that chapter on **The Equal Commitment Rule.**)

1. PRAY! PRAY! Then pray some more!
2. Discern who God wants you to sponsor.
3. Continue to spend time in prayer.
4. Make an appointment to discuss with potential candidate the purpose and benefits of Emmaus, what you experienced as benefits, some positive aspects of the event, and the follow-up dimension.
5. Extend an invitation and seek a commitment.
6. Make preparations for your candidate.
7. Make sacrifices for your candidate.
8. Support the event during the three days.
9. Encourage the participant in his/her Fourth Day involvement
10. Help your participant act on the new commitments
11. Inform the participant of ways to serve in the Emmaus Community
12. Help your participant sponsor others.

Sponsorship is an act of love for God, the participants, for the Emmaus Community, and for the church. It is a living demonstration of agape love. Through sponsorship, we become instruments of God's design and prevenient grace.

### **VIII. Who Can Sponsor?**

Any person who has participated in an Emmaus Ministry or other recognized three-day movement event can sponsor a person to any Emmaus ministry event as long as they understand the aim and responsibilities of sponsorship and fulfil them for the person they sponsor.

- Church leaders such as pastors and ministry directors make excellent sponsors because they know the persons who are ready to make the most of their Emmaus Ministries event and will strengthen the church by their participation.
- Sometimes the best sponsors are people who have attended an event and want to sponsor their own family members (siblings, parents, children etc)
- In some cases, young or inexperienced sponsors need to be linked up with experienced sponsors in order to ensure follow-through on all the responsibilities of good sponsorship. Persons who only recently attended an event would better serve with the assistance of an experience cosponsor.

Sponsors do not serve as team members on Emmaus events with people they are sponsoring. If a sponsors choose to serve as team members, they should find others to sponsor their candidates. Team members cannot support a participant during the event in the manner intended, such as Sponsor's Hour, the Prayer Vigil and Candlelight.

On the one hand,

Confusing the roles of team member and sponsor in relationship with a participant diminishes the value of both roles.

- One the one hand, team members who also sponsor often cannot serve without anticipating, hovering, or being distracted by a special interest in the responses of "their" participants.
- On the other hand, the hopes and expectations of their ever-present sponsors on the team may limit participants' freedom to respond, a likelihood that is antithetical to the principles of Emmaus.

Sponsors do not serve as team members on the same event, and participants should not see their sponsors serving "behind the scenes" as support persons during the event. The absence of sponsors

gives the participants the space they need for their own interaction with and experience of God during the event.

### **SPONSORS' HOUR**

After the "Send-Off" and the participants have left the assembly room to begin their event, the sponsors and others present have a time of prayer for the participants and their experience. The Community Spiritual Director or board member leads Sponsors' Hour or arranges for someone in the Community to lead it.

This brief service consists of prayer for each of the participants by name. the leader may read aloud the name of each participant. As a name is read, their sponsor walks to the front where the participants crosses are draped across the altar. The sponsor takes a cross to the altar for their participant and hangs it across the arm of a large standing cross (Please notice the crosses are not labeled with the participants' name.) The individual crosses will remain there throughout the event as a symbolic focus of prayer in the Prayer Chapel. If a sponsor is not present and did not arrange for a proxy, any Community member may spontaneously stand in for their sponsor.

### **A MODEL SPONSOR**

The following is a statement from Jean Johnson Green, a member of the Nashville Upper Room Emmaus Community. She went through Cursillo in 1979 and has served as registrar for the Emmaus Community, on the Board of Directors, as a Weekend Lay Director, and in the Upper Room Emmaus Ministries Office as Assistant Lay Director. Her practice serves as a good model for us all.

"Sponsorship is like being a Godparent. A Godparent doesn't just stand with a person at the front of the church but helps them grow in the spiritual life. One time a woman couldn't attend an Emmaus Event because she had a one-month-old baby. She said there's no way I can go, because I have no one to keep the children. And I said, "Oh yes you do!"

During the three days, I always try, if the family's involved-to let the family members know that I've seen the participant who is doing well and having a good time. Sharing information about the participant is especially important to the family members who haven't been through yet and don't know what its all about. I took one woman out to dinner on the Friday night her husband was away.

After their events, I strongly feel you call the persons you sponsor. Sometimes people are excited to change the world, but the fire can die down if its not fed. As a sponsor my job is to see that the fire is fed and grows. It doesn't take that much, a phone call, an invitation to a Gathering. Maybe instead of my going to Candlelight, I keep the kids to a couple so they can work in the kitchen on a subsequent Emmaus Event.

I also try and get together with some other recent participants to start a group reunion. I meet with them several times and show them what its all about. I have my own group, but I help the new group get started. When I don't see persons I've sponsored at a gathering, my responsibility isn't to pester them, but to maintain contact, offering to go with them the next time and maybe dinner after.

### **SPONSOR'S LETTER AND CHECKLIST**

Alabama Emmaus Community  
P.O. Box 38, Cropwell, AL 35054  
Office: 9205) 812-0345  
Email: Office @ALAEmmaus.org

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your pilgrim \_\_\_\_\_, has been invited to attend the Walk to Emmaus # \_\_\_\_, DATE. You should begin preparing for these three days now. Here is a checklist below:

1. Make sure your pilgrim notifies the Emmaus Office, in writing, by DATE, to confirm the invitation. Please contact your pilgrim and make sure they understand if the response is not received by this date, they will be removed from this Walk.
2. After bringing your pilgrim to Camp, please remember these important responsibilities:
  - Registration is in Hutto entry. (Please see the enclosed map of Camp, **Plan to arrive at Camp between 6:30 and 7:00 pm and remain with your pilgrim**).
  - After Registration, unload your pilgrim's suitcase and bedding in the South Wing of the Lodge. (Yes, you still need to bring bedding and towels).
  - After getting your pilgrim settled in their room, return to Hutto to enjoy so refreshments, find your pilgrims roommates and stay to pray for your pilgrim at Sponsor's Hour.
  - **Sponsor's Hour** at Hutto auditorium at **7:00 pm, Thursday**
  - Candlelight at Hutto auditorium at **7:45 pm, Saturday**
  - Get to Camp by 4:30 on Sunday and start at the South Wing of the Lodge to retrieve your pilgrim's bedding and suitcase. Then go to **Closing** at Hutto Auditorium at **4:45 PM, Sunday**
3. While \_\_\_\_\_ is on the Walk, you will become a provider for the family. This is a sacred trust you hold as a sponsor, and one of the most meaningful gifts of agape you can give. Make yourself available to \_\_\_\_\_'s family for emergencies, fellowship time and spiritual support.
4. Gather letters of agape for \_\_\_\_\_. It is your responsibility to gather as many letters as you can, but a minimum of 15-20 is recommended. **These letters should be brought to camp on Thursday night and turned in after the pilgrims go downstairs.**
5. Remember individual agape must not be left in the pilgrim's room at any time during the Walk. If this is done, the Agape Committee will collect it and you can give it to them after the Walk. This is necessary to be fair to all the pilgrims.
6. Remind \_\_\_\_\_ **THAT THEIR BALANCE IS DUE WITH THEIR ACCEPTANCE.** Your pilgrim's balance is \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Also, they may want to bring a check or cash for purchases from the book table beginning on Saturday.
7. CHILDREN ARE NOT ALLOWED IN HUTTO AUDITORIUM WHILE A WALK IS IN PROGRESS.
8. Be sure all of your pilgrim's letters and other personal items are picked up downstairs in the Conference Room after the Walk.
9. ***No watches, cell phones, pagers, cameras, recorders, or any other electronic devices allowed during the Walk. Photos are not allowed on the premises.***
10. Take \_\_\_\_\_ to the follow-up meeting in their cluster following the Walk.

There are changes to the pilgrims housing. We are asking for your prayers and sacrifices for your pilgrim. If needed, call the 24-hour emergency telephone number at Camp (246) 538-9860.

Please keep the team and pilgrims of Walk # \_\_\_\_ in your prayers. If I can be of any help, please feel free to call me.

De Colores!

Angel Rait, sjc Community Coordinator