Sponsor Information

The strength of any Emmaus community is a direct result of that community's sponsoring practices. Emmaus is designed to spiritually renew church members who, in turn, can Christianize their environments such as home, community, vocations and churches. Hopefully, your pilgrim is already on a pilgrimage, willing to grow and move forward in his or her journey of faith. The primary reason for sponsoring someone on the Walk to Emmaus is to deepen that person's relationship with Christ and to create an enthusiastic disciple to work in God's kingdom. The aim of sponsorship is to build up the body of Christ. If the community makes a commitment to recruit 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 illness can be cured, it will weaken the entire community. Sponsorship has far-reaching implications. It affects not only the sponsor and the pilgrim. It has a direct bearing on the health of the Emmaus movement and impacts the church affected by the movement. Wise sponsorship is purposeful and prayerful. Sponsorship is an act of love for God, for the pilgrims, for the Emmaus community, and for the church. It demonstrates agape love, making us instruments of prevenient grace.

Whom do we sponsor?

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.

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
* members and leaders who represent a cross section of the church and who will help Emmaus remain theologically sound, centered on the essentials of our common faith, and open to different perspectives
* respected laypersons and clergypersons whose participation, support, and leadership will encourage others to take the Walk and will build sound, balanced leadership base for the movement in the community
* members of diverse congregations, denominations, and ethnic groups

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. Other persons may be unsuitable choices for sponsorship to Emmaus 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: 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 Walk, or persons who do not share belief in traditional doctrines of the faith basic to the major denominations of the church and to Emmaus
* Persons undergoing an emotional crisis (for example-family breakup, job loss, severe grief) or who are psychologically unstable
* Persons who decide not to make a Walk after being presented an 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 Walk to Emmaus is not the way to renewal for every Christian
* "Church hoppers," members 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."

Please be in prayer for your pilgrim, all the pilgrims and the team during this time before the walk. Keep praying for your pilgrim after the Walk-many go back to tough situations in their Fourth Days. We all know the value of prayer and how vital it is to the success of the walk. Also, take advantage of the opportunity to sign up for the prayer vigil during the Walk.

Each pilgrim has a different comfort level about going on the Walk. Remember that there is nothing secret about the Walk to Emmaus. Your pilgrim might need to have some information about what to expect such as when they will be picked up and returned, sleeping arrangements, what to bring, what will happen during the day, that they will be celebrating communion daily, etc...Candlelight and the agape letters have their own special effect in showing God's love and you may want that to be a surprise.

Please plan on doing everything you can to make your pilgrim's walk a success. Be praying, gather agape letters from loved ones and friends-these are so important for your pilgrim (remember to put your pilgrims first and last name on the outside of the envelope), get them a "goody" bag for send off, make pillow and food agape to take, help with anything their family might need during the weekend and plan on attending all of the weekend activities such as send-off, sponsor's hour, candlelight and closing.

After the Walk, it is vital for you to help your pilgrim get plugged into a reunion group and the Emmaus Community. Reunion groups are one of the greatest treasures of the Emmaus movement . These groups will help your pilgrim to persevere in the life of grace and hold on to those valuable aspects of the weekend when they return to their life in the world.

If your pilgrim wants to sponsor someone, they should go through Sponsor's training, but it is also helpful for you to help them sponsor someone, at least for the first time. Help them to pass on the gift of good sponsorship. You can also be a strong influence on them getting involved in Community activities. Plan on bringing them to the first Community after their Walk and encourage them to get involved by sponsoring and by taking part in Walk activities such as angeling, attending send-offs, attending candlelight, and closing. Your job as a sponsor does not end after the Walk is over. Please continue to be a disciple to your pilgrim by showing God's agape love.

Your primary motivation for sponsoring a person ought to be Christ's love in you wanting that same love for the prospective pilgrim. Building the kingdom of God is serious work, and building a strong Emmaus community is part of that task. Please take your sponsorship seriously by doing your part. Thank you so much for your willingness to keep our Emmaus community strong and flourishing.

The Emmaus Board

\*This is information comes directly from the " Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus", the "Walk to Emmaus sponsorship booklet", and the "Upper Room Day Four book."