

The Sponsor's Role in the Walk to Emmaus and Chrysalis

The Walk to Emmaus has a different way of recruiting participants than is customary in most church programs. People who have been on the Walk invite other people to attend and become their sponsors. Sponsors determine who among the active members of a church would be interested in attending a Walk, would benefit from it, and would extend those benefits to the congregation.

The sponsor's initial role is to explain to a potential pilgrim the purpose and format of the Walk so that he or she can make an informed decision about attending. The sponsor supports the pilgrim before the Walk and afterwards as the pilgrim integrates the Walk to Emmaus into his or her life.

The sponsor helps to involve the pilgrim in a Fourth Day Reunion Group, takes him or her to a Community Gathering, and guides him or her in the process of returning to the congregation. The Walk to Emmaus is an intense experience, and the pilgrim makes a commitment to be fully involved in the experience; the sponsor is expected to help with the pilgrim's concerns at home, such as child care or church responsibilities. In some communities, the sponsor also pays the pilgrim's expenses, or deposit.

Sponsorship is perhaps the major reason for the Walk's success. It has done more than anything to create informed participation. Pilgrims know what they are doing, and pastors and denominational leaders can support the Walk with confidence. Because of their sponsors, pilgrims are able to sustain discipleship after the weekend.

Reprinted from Coming Down from the Mountain: Returning to Your Congregation by Lawrence Martin