

Sydney Emmaus Community

SPONSORING AN ALARGA WALK

The Emmaus Walk program has been developed specifically for the development of Christian leaders. Alarga (reaching out) is an officially adapted Walk to Emmaus that embraces people with physical disabilities and follows the Emmaus format very closely.

Alarga is not suitable for persons with an intellectual disability, or the very elderly.

Alarga differs from Emmaus in three ways:

- Both men and women are accepted.
- The number of talks is reduced from fifteen to thirteen, by combining some Emmaus talks.
- The talks are also reduced from twenty minutes to fifteen minutes duration.

All the course content is retained, as are all those 'special' features of a standard Emmaus Walk weekend.

Alarga must not be offered as an alternative to Emmaus for couples who do not wish to take their walks separately.

If husbands and wives are present, they do not share sleeping accommodation or sit at the same table in the conference room. They are able to share during breaks and free time.

The slower pace that is achieved by the changes made in the conference room allows more time for dressing and showering and for a rest time of one to one and a half hours in the afternoon in preparation for the evening activities – this does not include Sunday afternoon. The Alarga weekend remains a very full three days, each day starting at 6.15 am and finishing around 10.30 pm. Sunday concludes at approximately 6.00 pm. Your pilgrims need to be able and happy to meet this commitment for the three days.

Alarga team members will include those who have experience in working with people with disabilities and their special needs. A comprehensive assessment will be made of pilgrims prior to the weekend and before acceptance of registration will be carried out, to assess the capabilities of the pilgrim and determine if their needs can be met on the weekend. Please make your pilgrim aware of this.

If this assessment is not done in depth, then the pilgrims and weekend will suffer.

Alarga has a fourth Assistant Lay Director (ALD) caregiver, who has medical experience, is licensed in your State and is specifically responsible for medications and other special needs of the pilgrims and team.

While Alarga is slower paced than an Emmaus Walk, it remains a very full and long weekend. At the Alarga closing you will witness the same blessings and joys experienced by the pilgrims on an Emmaus weekend. Please prayerfully consider the needs and capabilities of your potential pilgrims before you enthusiastically sponsor them for an Alarga weekend.

It is desirable that half the pilgrims are able-bodied, have been fully informed about the Alarga weekend and have no reservations about spending three days with people with physical disabilities.

Alarga pilgrims are immediately absorbed into an existing Emmaus community after their Alarga weekend.

SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A SPONSOR is one who takes responsibility for another. **SPONSORSHIP** is a privilege. It requires a lot of prayer and being attentive to God's leading as to whom we ask and talk to about participating in an Emmaus Walk. ***If you're unable to carry out these responsibilities, please organise another person to do this for you.***

1. Who to invite

Consider sponsoring persons who are committed to living a life that is pleasing to God, those who want to grow and increase their knowledge and understanding of God and His will. The program is designed to encourage Christians and to equip them for service in the Church. Invite Christians who are keen to grow spiritually – Church Leaders, Pastors, couples and singles.

2. Who not to invite

An Alarga Walk is designed for Christians. It is not designed for people involved in unresolved emotional distress. People who have strong theological hang ups may not want to listen to others and be open to God's love and to what God has to say to them during the Walk.

3. Talk about the Walk

When you feel God has led you to talk to a person about the Alarga Walk explain what the weekend is about, its basic format and its purpose – it is structured, thirteen talks, group discussion, plenty of good food, fun and serious times. If the person is married, speak with their partner and encourage equal commitment by both.

Answer any questions they may ask. Always give an honest and truthful answer. Remember there are **NO SECRETS** about an Alarga Walk. You don't have to mention every detail about what happens on a Walk, eg no need to detail that there will be agape in abundance! It is better to tell more than necessary than to be secretive.

They probably won't ask about Candlelighting or Dying Moments, but if they do - answer truthfully. No matter how you might try to describe Candlelighting, for most people it is still an awesome experience.

Don't assume the person you are sponsoring will experience the same things you did. Each of us is at a different place on our spiritual journey. For some, the Alarga experience will be mountaintop, a new beginning. For others, it will be strengthening for the journey they are already on. We must not pre-judge our candidate or set them up with unhelpful expectations.

Explain that part of being a sponsor is for you to bring them to the Conference Centre on the **Thursday night**, come back to the Closing gathering on **Sunday afternoon** and take them home. Tell them the three days should be uninterrupted with no business matters to attend to, no phone calls and ideally leaving mobile phones and cameras at home. Phone calls only for an emergency.

Over the weekend you may need to offer help to the family at home, eg minding children, meals, fellowship, as well as being available if an emergency arises.

4. Application and Registering

Now that your friend has decided to come on the Alarga Walk ask them to fill out the Application Form then to give it back to you. You complete the Sponsor section. Don't delay in getting applications completed and sent to the Registrar with the specified deposit - it's essential to allow plenty of time to organise agape letters and pray for your Pilgrim. If there is any additional information that should be known, discuss this with the Registrar.

5. Fees

Sponsors do not have to pay for their Pilgrims. If you are able to and want to give that as a gift to your pilgrim that is OK or you may wish to pay the deposit but it is not essential. Please let the Registrar know if there is difficulty with payment - we do not want anyone to miss out because they are not able to raise the money.

6. Application Acceptance

The Registrar takes the Application Form to the Sydney Community Board or between meetings, the appointed person (usually the Community Lay Director) for approval. Following approval the Registrar will acknowledge to the Sponsor and the Pilgrim that the Application has been accepted.

7. Agape Letters

The Registrar will forward on to you the **form letter** to use as an example to send when contacting people to write an agape letter or card to the pilgrim. We recommend that you ask 12 people to write a letter or card, seal it in an envelope, then place it in another envelope and send it to you. The people you should ask to write an agape letter are spouse, family, good friends - church or other. If you don't know the person well or it's hard to get letters, please let the Registrar know and she/he will arrange for people to write a letter even though they may not be known to the writer.

In the unusual circumstance that you are **sponsoring someone you don't really know** and you don't know their family or close friends you will need to ask the person for the names and a contact phone number or address of 3 or 4 people close to them whom you could contact to ask them to pray with you for the weekend. Contact these people, ask them to pray and write a letter and also ask for two or three names of other people you can contact.

If you are **sponsoring a couple** its appropriate to ask both people to write a letter to the other person. Ask separately - not when they are together. Lots of people have written an Emmaus agape letter long before they have gone on a Walk.

Bring the **bundle of letters** to the Prayer Chapel at the Conference Centre on the Thursday night (drop them off just before you go home so your pilgrim doesn't see what you are doing) or bring them to Candlelighting and place them in the receptacle which will be near the entrance to the Church. The Prayer Service will commence at 7pm at Pittwater Uniting Church followed by Candlelighting at 8.30pm in the Stewart Hall at Elanora Conference Centre.

8. Arrival at the Conference Centre

Arrive by 7pm at the Conference Centre on the Thursday night - allow plenty of time so your pilgrim can join in from the very beginning. Your pilgrim needs to have had a meal before arrival.

9. At the Conference Centre

The Registrar will meet you and your pilgrim. He or she will be given their name badge and room allocation. Escort your pilgrim to his or her room, maybe help make their bed and then proceed to the meeting hall where drinks and nibbles will be available. Stay with your pilgrim but introduce him or her to other people. When announced sponsors should say farewell and leave - then go to the Prayer Chapel to pray for your pilgrim and hang their neck cross on the larger cross. You may also leave your bundle of collected Agape letters.

10. Sponsor Responsibilities during the Walk

After your Pilgrim's Application has been accepted you will be informed of how to select a half hour prayer slot on the **Prayer Vigil** which covers the entire 72 hours of the Walk. There will also be a **Kitchen Roster** if you can help for one of the meals. Sponsors will be expected to **attend Candlelighting, pray for your pilgrim, attend the Closing Service** and take your Pilgrim home. Also attend to any help the pilgrim's family left at home may need.

11. After the Walk

Encourage the Pilgrims in their Fourth Day involvement. Give them an opportunity to talk through their experience. Help them find a Reunion Group and go together to Gatherings at least a few times.

Continue your involvement with the Emmaus community by Sponsoring, attending Gatherings, coming to Candlelighting and Closings. The Community Newsletter and the Website show how you can take a place on the Prayer Vigil and Kitchen Roster for future Walks.

Contacts

Registrar Cathy Thompson, ph 9838 0656, 0408 878 808, email registrar08@sydneyemmaus.org.au
Prayer and Kitchen Roster go to www.sydneyemmaus.org.au and follow the links.