

Sponsorship

Each *Via de Christo* Weekend possesses a unique identity. As the final farewells sound through the camp, we recognize that this specific “God Moment” will never be repeated. This combination of guests and team members will never assemble again. And yet, each *Via de Christo* Weekend shares common elements with every other. The *Rollos*, the table discussions, the posters, the singing, the joyful worship the *palanca* and the formation of Christian community reoccur on every retreat. Another common element is weekend guests asking themselves, team members or each other how to share this experience with others. Like many other elements of a weekend the act of sharing the weekend experiences has a name – Sponsorship. Sharing a weekend with others is one way of fulfilling our charge of “bringing the world to Christ.”

The Perfect Sponsor

The perfect sponsor, like the perfect Christian, doesn't exist. A good sponsor should meet several of the suggested criteria below.

- Model – A sponsor should model a life of piety, study and action for their guest. The sponsor's three-legged stool should be balanced because it needs (with the Spirit's help and guidance) to support the weights of both sponsor and guest until the guest constructs their own stool by establishing their discipline.
- Reunion – A sponsor should belong to an active reunion group. Sponsorship is always hard work, sometimes frustrating, occasionally stressful, and an occasion for lots of prayer. A Christ centered and committed reunion group supports the sponsor and lightens the sponsorship load.
- Stability – A sponsor should be a mature Christian leader who is blessed with a stable, orderly life. If the sponsor's private life is in turmoil from a job change, grieving, parenting demands, or demands

from aging parents, that sponsor may not have the emotional, spiritual or physical energy to invest in their guest.

- Commitment – A sponsor should be committed to performing all of the tasks sponsorship requires.

Sponsorship tasks

Sponsorship is a lot of work. But, know that the Holy Spirit will help.

- Pray – Pray about *everything* associated with the sponsor process. Begin by praying for direction about whom to invite. Pray that the Holy Spirit grants you words with which to explain the weekend, issue the invitation and answer questions. Pray that God use the *Via de Christo* to empower your guest as a more committed Christian. Pray for your guest before, during and after the weekend. Pray for yourself.
- Select – Who should attend a *Via de Christo*? A guest should be a stable, mature Christian leader with the ability to transform their environments and bring the world to Christ. Like the perfect Christian and sponsor, the perfect guest doesn't exist. You may find it helpful to ask this question, “Does my church need this person to attend a *Via de Christo*?” When the answer is a resounding “Yes!”, you are on the right track. If you find yourself asking “Does this person *need* *Via de Christo*?” to fix a broken place in their life, the answer is probably no. This may not be the time for the weekend.
- Invite – Pray, screw up your courage and **ask**. The wording of your invitation will be as unique as the guest you invite. Successful invitations include depicting the weekend as “continuing education for Christian leaders”, a three day spirituality retreat”, “church camp for grown-ups”, or “a way to experience God's love in a more tangible way”. After discussion with others in your group, consider inviting your guest to your reunion group meeting. There is



one woman in ENCVdC who attended reunion group meetings weekly, listened to a talk critique and made her own palanca for six months before attending as a guest. She had a great weekend.

- Re-Inviting – Expect to be turned down. Continue praying and re-inviting. The Holy Spirit will provide a correct time for your guest. Some people are invited for years and by many different people before the time is right. Be patient.
- Informing – Tell your guest as much as they can absorb about the weekend. Discuss the talks, the sleeping arrangements, the daily worship (perhaps warn them about common cup and the practice of intinction or dunking), the table seating, the table discussions, the Thursday night silence, your plan to provide transportation to and from the camp, the dumb chicken song. You may wish to withhold detailed discussions of the weekend’s “surprises”. Give packing advice.
- Arrange personal palanca – Approach significant individuals in your guest’s life and ask them for a letter of love and affirmation. Begin with the immediate family and the guest’s pastor and Sunday school teacher. Ask family members if there are others you should contact (school friends, former pastors or co-workers). Arrange to have the letters delivered to you in a sealed envelope and explain that you won’t read them. Ask the letter writers to keep it a secret because it is a surprise.
- Transport – Drive your guest to the camp. Attend send off with them and pick them up after closing.
- Family Contact – If your guest has family who are not attending the weekend, touch base with them. Consider inviting them to dinner Friday evening or planning a Saturday morning activity.



- Serenade – Attend, sing and share God’s love.
- Pick up – Attend closing, pick your guest up and drive them home. The time in the car is an excellent time to help your guest begin planning their fourth day. Schedule a lunch, dinner or meeting with your guest before Thursday of the following week. (If absolutely necessary, you can delegate one of the trips to the camp to someone else, but your guest will feel the *most* comfortable if you drive.)
- First week contact – During this meeting use the reunion card to acquaint your guest with the order of reunion. Provide your guest with a list of different reunion groups in your area and a contact person in each group. Invite your guest to your group. Make arrangements to attend the Welcome Ultreya (normally held the following weekend.) Make carpooling arrangements for the Ultreya. Pray.
- Reunion Group – After your guest visits with a reunion group, call them and find out how it went. If your guest has trouble making a reunion group connection, provide encouragement. Invite your guest to your group again. If necessary, form a two-person reunion group with your guest until they become established in their own group. Pray for your guest.
- Monthly – Touch base with your guest at least once a month for the first year after their weekend. Invite them to attend serenades and Ultreyas with you. Give gentle guidance on how your guest can further develop their own life of piety, study and action. Pray.



Nothing in this list is intended as a rigid rule, except pray! Otherwise, these are guidelines. Some sponsors will be stronger in one area and others in another area. Christ isn’t asking you to be a perfect Christian or sponsor. Christ is asking you to try, to do your best and to trust God for the rest.