

Agape Letter Guidelines

All of the following information was taken from the Emmaus Handbook. Rainbow's End will be following the Handbook.

The individual agape letters are another, more penetrating reminder that the pilgrims are loved, not only by the people on the Walk who have not known them long and people far away who do not know them at all, but by persons who know them best and to whom they will be returning soon.

Each sponsor collects eight to twelve letters for his or her pilgrim. If the sponsor receives more than twelve letters, he or she will certainly include family letters in the twelve. All the letters above twelve can be delivered as a Fourth-Day surprise. *[Please understand that the Agape Chair will return any letters beyond twelve so that the sponsor can give them to the Pilgrim after the Walk]*

Limiting the number of letters delivered on the Walk for each pilgrim has several advantages. The main advantage is that the pilgrim can usually read all twelve letters within the time allotted. Persons trying to read more than twelve may be frustrated by their inability to read all. This frustration will detract from the special experience of having read the letters. A second advantage is to ensure that a disparity between the quantities of letters each pilgrim receives does not distract from the quality of the message that the letters convey. Since twelve is the number of letters that most pilgrims receive anyway, we ask sponsors to avoid the norm for the sake of "their" pilgrims at the expense of others. Sponsors aim for twelve well-chosen letters. In doing so, everyone can be confident that manifold expressions of grace for one pilgrim will not become an obstacle for other pilgrims who appear to receive less. Sponsors are asked to mark envelopes from family and close friends on the outside with some symbol, such as **F** for family and friends.

Personal agape should not include personal gift items or bouquets of flowers that are given to one pilgrim but not to all. Such gifts should be returned to the sponsor for delivery after and away from the weekend.

The following are some helpful hints to make things easier for you. They are not from the Handbook but are within the guidelines.

In order to get a list of people, contact a close family member or friend. Ask them to give you the names, addresses and phone numbers of people who are close relatives, special friends and some names that might surprise your Pilgrim. Ask them to please prioritize the names starting with the ones from whom your Pilgrim will most want to hear. *[This is in case the list should exceed twelve.]* **Remember**, it's okay to have more than 12 but keep them until after the Walk. Only hand in 12 to the Agape Chair.

If you can't get a list any other way, ask the Pilgrim to give you a list of people to contact that will be praying for him/her during the weekend. Tell them to include addresses and phone numbers *[You don't want to tell them to prioritize so ask them to please indicate whether the person is family or friend.]*

Be sure to keep the list and as the letters come in, you can check off the names. If you want to be sure that you know exactly who you've gotten the letter from, write their name and return address on the outer envelope that you provide for them. You don't have to provide postage but experience has taught us that providing the inner and outer envelopes is a tremendous help in assessing who has and hasn't written *[See the back of this sheet for an example letter request and note the instructions about how to return the letters]*

Providing your email address can help with those people who wait until the last minute.

[Date]

Dear

On [Date] , [Pilgrim's first and last name] will be attending a Walk to Emmaus in [give location of Walk]. The Walk to Emmaus is a weekend of spiritual renewal with many gifts and surprises. One of the surprises is the mail that persons attending receive from their loved ones and friends.

As [Pilgrim]'s sponsor, I am responsible for contacting family and close friends and asking them to send a note, card or letter to her. In order to get the names and addresses, I asked [Pilgrim] to give me a list of people that she'd like to be praying for her. Your name was on [Pilgrim]'s list, and I know that you are important to her. I certainly do ask for you to be in prayer for her but I need for you to write her as well. [or you can say "I asked _____'s husband for a list of people who she'd want to hear from including names that would surprise her."] Your letter will be a total surprise so please help me keep this a secret.

This letter is an opportunity for you to express your appreciation of [Pilgrim] and what your relationship with her has meant and means. You might want to recall some humorous event or some happening that has been special to the two of you. This is a letter of love and will be read only by [Pilgrim]. We know that our friends love us, but reading why they love us is very special. I can tell you from personal experience that your letter will be cherished by [Pilgrim]. Please send only a letter and no gifts.

Would you please help make [Pilgrim]'s Walk to Emmaus special by doing the following:

Write a letter to [Pilgrim] and sign it.

1. Put it in the envelope I provided and seal it. (I have put your relationship to her in the corner to keep up with the letters as they come in)
2. Write _____'s first and last name on the outside.
3. Put the sealed envelope in the larger envelope and mail it to me prior to [date]

Remember to keep your letter a **surprise** and to start praying for right now. I know that God will bless [Pilgrim] as she has blessed and enriched our lives. Thank you in advance for your part in making the Walk to Emmaus a very special time in [Pilgrim]'s life.

Sincerely, (add your name, address, and phone. And email-if you want)

[The following is a paragraph that can be included for Pilgrims who know about the letters]

As one of her sponsors, I am responsible for contacting family and friends and asking them to write a note or letter to [Pilgrim] to receive during this special weekend. While the letters are a surprise to most of the participants, [Pilgrim] already knows about them because she has written letters for others who have gone on a Walk to Emmaus. What she doesn't know is who will be writing her and how very much she will treasure the letters.