

Dear Journey Group Members,

We have been receiving inquiries about the membership fee now required of journey group members. We are providing responses to frequently asked questions (FAQ) to help you understand the need for a membership fee and some of the considerations that have been given to the reasons and alternatives.

**Question 1: What is the membership fee?**

The membership fee is \$6 a month; \$27 for a semester, or \$54 for the year. Provisions have been made for students who are off-campus engaged in activities that prevent them from participating for a semester (such as studying abroad, internship, student teaching, etc.)

The membership fee remains the same regardless of the number of times a group meets in a semester. The fee is not based on a per meeting usage. To understand the significance of a membership fee consider the average cost of a latte. Clemens Perk sells lattes for \$3 each. Equal to the cost of 2 lattes a month a student can participate in a journey group.

**Question 2: What is the significance of the membership fee?**

For the past 8 years Companions on a Journey had been funded by a grant which ends September 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. With the completion of the grant we no longer have funding available. Over the past 9 months several individuals have been working to find ways to sustain our program. Many of the ideas considered and explored (which have included seeking funding through student activity fees) have not provided the level of support needed or did not accommodate the needs of our program's structure and focus. As we've studied and explored the situation and options, we decided the best way to support the journey group program is through a membership fee.

The average cost per student to participate in a journey group is \$450 per year. The membership fee we are requesting is less than 15% of the total cost and we trust it is a fair price to ask students to support for the benefits they receive by participating in journey group.

**Question 3: What are the funds used for?**

There are many costs associated with journey group: the Journey Welcome and Orientation, the Spring Reflection, reflection guides, meetings spaces, refreshments, skill development, staffing, coordinating and training volunteers to facilitate, and more. We have examined our budget and have made as many reductions as possible. Any further reductions would affect the integrity of the journey group program.

**Question 4: What would the impact be if refreshments were not offered?**

The refreshment, while it may seem minor to some, does have a purpose. The refreshments are

vital to the companioning process as follows:

The emphasis is not on the type of food offered but on the spiritual significance of sharing a common table: to break bread together as Jesus did and to symbolize that your group is breaking open your lives together and holding your experiences that you're talking about as sacred. The refreshments will serve the same purposes that the light meal provided formerly. In addition to supplying a source of nourishment, the time for refreshments will enable the participants to connect after the month since their last session. Also, this type of coming together will help people unwind and gain focus on the process at hand before sharing, listening and responding during the formal part of the session. These purposes for gathering around refreshments can help orient the members to the sacredness of what they will share about their lives and what they will receive through their listening and responding group members.

We also need to take into consideration health issues for members when providing for the refreshments. People who are diabetic, epileptic, etc., require a structured regimented diet. Many groups meet at meal time. To ask those with health issues to forego refreshments may put their health at risk.

There are also social justice concerns regarding the refreshments and membership. Not all members are able to afford a "potluck" approach to providing refreshment for various reasons one being financial abilities. We welcome all members who wish to participate in a journey group, regardless of their ability to afford a membership. In addition some of our facilitators do not work on campus, come from greater distances, or have families that require provisions while the facilitator is with their group. These additional aspects may challenge their ability to contribute to a "potluck" and require our consideration.

Another consideration related to social justice is accountability. Last year we spent in excess of \$3000 in food that was not picked up or canceled in proper time. Some students and facilitators did not alert us when they needed to miss a meeting or stop out for a period of time. As a result we incurred costs that could have been prevented. The membership fee, does help to offset a portion of these expenses while at the same time offer some accountability of the participant.

You may choose to forego the refreshment however; the membership cost would remain the same: \$54 per year.

**Question 5: Would meeting in places that are open to the public such as O'Connell's help lower costs?**

All the spaces we use for journey group meetings are considered 'public' spaces i.e. Campus Ministry's Conference Room and Reflection Room, TRC Boardroom, classrooms, etc. Even the lounge area in a students' dorm/apartment is considered 'public' space. We are charged a flat rate for these spaces regardless of the number of times they are used. The fewer times these spaces are used the higher the per-use cost becomes.

Some of the ‘public’ spaces such as O’Connell’s do not provide the privacy or contemplative environment conducive to the needs for the journey group process or members. Our first consideration for meeting spaces needs to focus on the members and whether or not the environment will provide the sacred space for the companioning process to be effective and beneficial.

Other considerations or possibilities include groups meeting in the facilitator’s home. Meeting at the facilitator’s home will not reduce the costs we are assessed for the meeting spaces on campus. While we welcome journey groups to meet in their facilitator’s homes, the majority of groups are not able to provide this as an option.

**Question 6: Would attending other programs such as Inspiring Leaders Certificate Program (ILCP) classes instead of skill development workshops be an affordable alternative?**

While we encourage participation in programs such as the ILCP classes, these programs have a much different focus than that of Companions’. The focus of those programs is primarily “civic.” The workshops we are sponsoring deal specifically with faith-based spirituality and vocation related subjects and themes; themes/subjects that are not included in programs such as the ILCP.

**Question 7: Are there options for students who may not afford the membership fee?**

Journey Groups will be available to all students regardless of the ability to afford the membership fee. We have scholarships available to assist students who wish to participate in journey group but may need financial assistance. The Financial Aid Department will assist the Director of Companions on a Journey in determining the level of scholarship a student may qualify for. To apply for a scholarship contact our office or check the scholarship box on the membership fee payment form.

**Question 8: If I have an idea or concern I would like to share about the membership fee who do I contact?**

If anyone would like to engage in conversation about the membership fee beyond what is written above, please contact S. Mary Reuter, OSB, Director of Companions on a Journey by email at [mreuter@csbsju.edu](mailto:mreuter@csbsju.edu) or by phone at 320-363-5935 or you may contact Jodie Peschl, Administrative Assistant by email at [jpeschl@csbsju.edu](mailto:jpeschl@csbsju.edu) or by phone at 320-363-5939. We will be happy to and welcome the opportunity for sharing ideas and concerns.