

GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS - ACTS

(The St. Louis ACTS Missions Board offers this document as a reference tool, not a mandate. It is designed to help describe the role of the Spiritual Companions and their duties during Formation, while on the Retreat weekend and after the Retreat is completed. We recommend this document is reviewed by all Directors and shared with their Spiritual Companions prior to their acceptance of this very special ministry.)

Before beginning this journey, and all of the legs of the journey, Spiritual Companions are encouraged to stop and pause for a quiet moment and implore the Holy Spirit to walk with them and to give them the words that He wishes them to impart.

Before every meeting and each formation session use this prayer or one that you find serves the needs of the moment:

Holy Spirit, join us on this journey as we attempt to walk with Jesus and bring His love to those of us gathered here. We pray for your intercession to bring us closer to one another through His Word and that we will be able to bring this Word to those we will meet along the way. Holy Spirit, be with us always.

Spiritual Companionship During Team Formation

The Spiritual Companion is a critically important role during ACTS team formation. The Spiritual Companion's responsibility is to create a spiritually bonded team through scripture, prayer, meditation and small and large group faith sharing. Throughout the entire team formation, it is essential that the Spiritual Companion works to intertwine the chosen theme as a spiritual axiom that underlies the message and purpose of the formation, retreat and the overall ACTS mission.

To foster growth in personal and communal faith, the Spiritual Companion should encourage team members to commit to increasing their own personal faith life while in formation through palanca - daily rosary, chaplet, daily Mass, fasting, additional scripture reading or prayer life, etc. The team's development and commitment should extend beyond the weekly meeting times.

It is the faith journey that will bring team members out of themselves and help bond the team together. A very important element for the Spiritual Companion is to reveal who he or she is to the Team; it is not to ask the Team to do what they are unwilling to do themselves.

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Throughout the formation, Spiritual Companions should be ready to tell their stories and entice the team to talk about their stories in various aspects of their spiritual lives.

One of the biggest responsibilities of the Spiritual Companion is to plan and facilitate a Day of Reflection for the team. The Spiritual Companion is responsible to set the agenda for the day. In coordination with the Director, the Spiritual Companion should schedule the date and reserve a meeting place. During the Day of Reflection the Spiritual Companion should guide the team through spiritual exercises and sharing intended to strengthen their individual faith as well as their relationships with each other. This day is a day of prayer and it is not recommended that this be used as a day for service projects, rather a day dedicated to the Team's Spiritual growth.

There are many different types of team formation methods, but the emphasis should always be on preparing the team to present a spiritually bonded group to serve the retreatants. Some Spiritual Companions use the weekly Sunday readings as a basis for their meetings. Other Spiritual Companions use prayers, lives of the Saints, other religious readings and devotional materials to create meditations and spiritual exercises to present to the team and follow up with questions for discussion. Sharing should always be optional, never imposed. A good mix of large group and small group sharing allows everyone a chance to share however they are most comfortable.

Prayer Partners are a significant element of Formation. One of the great treasures of this retreat is the practice of praying with, and for, each other. At the outset of Formation the Spiritual Companion should develop the Prayer Partner grid/exchange to ensure that the members of the Team have an opportunity to pray with each of their fellow teammates throughout the Formation period. This can be enhanced by allowing some time during each of the meetings for "prayer sharing" with partners as well as the dialogue that accompanies that day's message.

To this point the Spiritual Companion should also ensure that as each Retreatant is signed up a Team member is assigned as their Prayer Partner and also provided with the responsibilities that go along with this special gift.

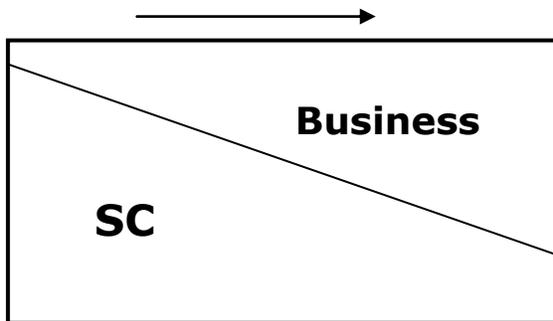
Prior to team formation, it is recommended that the director and the Spiritual Companion plan the formation schedule from beginning to

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end, determining how much time will be allotted at each meeting for spiritual, how much for social, how much for business and plan the dates for practice talks.

Generally, but not necessarily, the Spiritual Companions portion of the meeting is greater at the beginning of formation and less as the retreat approaches. Some say it is like a rectangle divided as pictured below.

However, it is more important to take care of the spiritual than the business, and the Spiritual Companion should always have time for a strong spiritual formation at the last meetings to "send the team off" to the retreat.



A sample 13 week schedule is provided as well – again this is only a sample, nothing mandatory, but it is designed to give a good sense for planning the time in Formation for both the Director and the Spiritual Companion.

Suggested Team Formation Meeting Template

Times:	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)
7:00	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer	Team Prayer
7:05	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual
7:10													
7:15													
7:20													
7:25													
7:30							Talk						
7:35						Talk				Services	Ministries	Services	Ministries
7:40					Talk								
7:45				Talk				Services	Ministries				
7:50													
7:55			Talk										
8:00							Break						
8:05	DVD	DVD				Break	Ministries						
8:10					Break	Services							
8:15				Break	Ministries								
8:20				Services									
8:25			Break										
8:30	Ministries	Services	Ministries									Music	Music
8:35										Music	Music		
8:40	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music				
8:45												Business	Business
8:50	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business		
8:55													
9:00	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer	Closing Prayer
	Social time	Spiritual time	Business	DvDs	Talks	Prayer	Music						

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Spiritual Companionship During the Retreat

An opportunity traditionally exists on Thursday afternoon, post set up and prior to Team dinner, for the Spiritual Companion to gather the Team together for their "Send Off" to the weekend. In some cases there is a Mass in the afternoon accompanied by the blessing of all of the weekend materials. Regardless of the time of the Mass it is recommended that the Spiritual Companion be given an hour late in the afternoon with the entire team to lead them through a short exercise in "settling in", reminding everyone why they are here, what their role is, that the Holy Spirit will guide them and to quietly and prayerfully consider what is about to happen. There are a number of prayerful exercises available but this should really be the time for the Team to get into the retreat mode and the Spiritual Companion should be the guide as the weekend begins. As part of this "settling in" exercise, the Spiritual Companion may want to lead a special prayer over the speakers as a group, in front of the Team, using scripture such as Isaiah 6: 1-8.

The Director and the Spiritual Companion should plan ahead of time how the Spiritual Companion will be introduced on the retreat and made available throughout the weekend.

It is very important that the Spiritual Companion be visibly present throughout the weekend. It is helpful to introduce the Spiritual Companion as one who walked with, and guided the team throughout their spiritual formation and will be available during the retreat weekend to speak to and/or work with individual retreatants - apart from small group discussions at the tables.

It is helpful to ask the Spiritual Companion to participate in some of the services and to help make announcements in order to make the Spiritual Companion more visible and approachable throughout the weekend. As an example, to give the Spiritual Companion some "face time" on the weekend, some directors ask the Spiritual Companion to read the History of ACTS, talk about the retreat theme, explain the River Rule, introduce the Divine Mercy Chaplet, lead the Rosary, etc. The Spiritual Companion should also be available to pray with the speakers before their talks.

During the Reconciliation service, when the priests are introduced, it should be made clear that the Spiritual Companion is available for confidential, one-on-one discussion during the Reconciliation service. Prior to the Reconciliation service, the priests should all be informed of

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the Spiritual Companion's role on the weekend and why the Spiritual Companion is available during the Reconciliation service; the Spiritual Companion is a support for the sacramental work that we all know is solely the responsibility of the priests.

Spiritual Companions After the Retreat

Prior to the retreat weekend, the director and the Spiritual Companion should plan how the Spiritual Companion will participate in the post-retreat activities (e.g., "Coming Down the Mountain" or "Fire" meetings, rosary, chaplet, existing small groups, etc), or to facilitate the creation of new small faith-sharing groups for the retreatants and the Team. Experience would confirm to all of us that the small groups formed post retreat are the most powerful tool coming from the weekend that provides continued focus on our faith – the Spiritual Companion can make this appeal at the close of the weekend and reaffirm this in the follow up meetings that take place after the retreat weekend.

Principle contributors to the content of this document:

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Fr. Tom Santen, St. Joseph's Manchester, and the Spiritual Advisor of the St. Louis ACTS Missions Board has reviewed this material and is in agreement with its application.

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Helpful Tips in preparation of the spiritual journey

The period of formation has taken many directions; the most frequently referenced are listed below:

- *Sunday Readings for the week following the Formation meeting*
- *The lives of the Saints*
- *Religious Books and references with specific themes that can be followed throughout the course of formation*
- *Specific Scripture readings focused on the Theme of the retreat*

Thoughts from John Schroeder as a Spiritual Companion:

In preparing for specific Team formation sessions, I found one website to be extremely valuable: The Center for Liturgy at St. Louis University <http://www.liturgy.slu.edu/indexw.html> It contains reflections on the readings, historical context, discussion questions, etc. For the most part, these resources served as "thought-starters" for me...then I'd fine-tune my formation remarks to focus on our work as an ACTS team.

The weekly team spiritual formation was totally focused on small group sharing. The groups were randomly assembled each week with at least twenty minutes of sharing on the scriptures for the coming Sunday. I prepared the questions for discussion. Each reading had two questions. The first question was oriented to understanding of the scripture and the second was focused on how to apply that reading to you personally. Each weekly formation meeting started with prayer and ended with prayer. Included in the final prayer were intentions by everyone present.

Small-group sharing is the most important part of formation, in my opinion, because it gives the team members a chance to get to know each other. The reflections are mostly there to get the ball rolling, to give the team members something to talk about. In that sense, it's certainly OK to reuse material that team members may have heard before...but part of the Spiritual Companion's job is to look for new stuff, too – stuff that might encourage all team members to continue to grow in their spirituality.

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Thoughts from Denny Hartley as a Spiritual Companion:

The spiritual development time from here on will be associated with some of the saints of the church and other notable individuals who have had an important impact on the church. When I was contemplating what to do for our formation, coincidentally, Father Tom recommended a book, "My Life with the Saints", by James Martin, SJ. It's a good book and it captured my interest quickly. It just seemed to offer a possible basis for us to learn more about our roots in the church. Our exploration will range from individuals in the early church right through some more contemporary individuals. It should be quite an adventure and I hope you will enjoy it as I have. By the way, I don't believe in coincidences.

Thoughts from Penny Hartley as a Spiritual Companion:

I found it helpful to speak with others who had been Spiritual Companions to try and get a grasp as to what I would be doing.

I relied heavily on "Celebrating the Word" each week to put together background information on the coming Sunday's readings and to formulate questions for all of us to reflect and share on in our small groups during the team meetings

(These reflections from John, Denny and Penny are taken from the St. Joe's Yahoo Group website, "Spiritual Companion Resource Manual" and is available after securing access from the St. Joe's ACTS Administrator.)

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Books

- *The Word Among Us*
- *The Magnificat*
- *Books by Henry Nouwen*
- *Books by Kathleen Norris*
- *Books by Ronald Rolheiser*
- *Books by Joyce Rupp*
- *Books by James Martin*
- *My Life with the Saints – James Martin*
- *One on One – John Wooden*
- *Tree Full of Angels*
- *Fresh Bread*
- *Shall I have this dance?*
- *'Just Like Jesus, Max Lucado*

Web references:

<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily.html>

<http://www.dailyscripture.net/>

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/livingspace/>

<http://www.liturgy.slu.edu/>

<http://www.upperroom.org/Devotional>

<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html>

<http://churchresources.info/pray/>

<http://members.aol.com/homilies/>

http://www.theemmausseries.com/html/sunday_reflections.html

<http://www.wau.org/>

http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_index.html

<http://www.Biblegateway.com>

http://www.henrihouwen.org/home/free_eletters/