

FUNDING YOUR TRAINING

So - you have decided that you want to be an Interfaith Minister - you **KNOW** that you want to be an Interfaith Minister. The problem is - you are not sure that you can afford it..... If only you could raise some money from somewhere..... So here are some guidelines to help you to fund what might be the most important training of your life.

Funding Yourself

Be ruthless in looking at all your personal avenues for funding yourself. Although the monthly instalment plan means that you pay more in the long run - it allows you to budget throughout the training period. Here are some things you could consider:

- Look at how much you usually spend on clothes, or meals out, or treats for yourself every month, then set aside half that money for Interfaith
- Ask all those people who usually give you a gift at birthday or Christmas to give you cash for the next two years (however small) and tell them what you will be spending it on
- Have a car boot sale - and get all your friends to donate something and get your children and more friends to help you collect for it and set it up
- Do you have a talent? Painting or photography or clothes making or model making etc, - set aside time for making things to sell that people can give as presents - especially at Christmas
- Look at all the things you have that you could sell - that expensive sweater that you have hardly worn; the electric toasted sandwich maker that you only used the first week you had it; a coffee table or side table that you could manage without; that set of crystal glasses which were a present but are not really your taste; the lawn mower because since you moved house you don't need one.....anything that you could get some money forask your friends or try eBay (especially good if you have some specialist things)
- Offer to do a talk on an area in which you are an expert or let local groups know. Tell them why you are raising money and charge them £3 per head (for example) with a minimum of 20 people. Aim for at least £50 each time you do it and try to do one a month. People are always looking for speakers
- Do you have any hands-on talent, Reiki, hairdressings, massage, reflexology - do an extra session a week and put £25 each week aside.

Whatever you choose ask yourself two questions:

- 1 How much money, realistically, can I raise from this?
- 2 How much time and energy will it take?

Your answers will help you decide where you should put your efforts.

So now you know how much you can raise through your own activities. What now?

Getting sponsorship

There are four parts to this:

- Deciding how much you need
- Deciding who you can ask
- Deciding what you can offer
- Planning the sponsorship meeting

Deciding how much you need

First of all you need to calculate how much you need - all your fee? Half of it? The decide whether you want to get it all up front or whether you are looking for a monthly payment. The more effort you have put into funding yourself the more you can show evidence of your commitment and your seriousness. People might be more prepared to help you if they can see evidence of your own effort in there too.

Deciding who you can ask

Now you need to be creative in identifying sources? You can start a list but revisit it after the next section - it might be easier to identify who to ask once you know what you can offer..... Here are some sources for you to consider.

- Friends, family and work colleagues
- Local churches
- Local hospitals/hospices
- Local schools/educational institutions
- Local newspapers

Deciding what you can offer

What you offer of course needs to be aligned with who you ask. Here are some things you can offer to the above groups.

Friends, family and work colleagues

Prepare a summary of what Interfaith is about and all the services you are being trained to do - weddings, funerals, baby naming, reconciliation services, worship services, ceremonies to mark special occasions (a Golden Wedding, a retirement). Let people know that the usual charge would be for you when you are fully trained (eg, between £350 and £800 for a wedding) then offer them a half price deal if they pay up front. Some things - a Golden Wedding ceremony for instance - you could do while still in training, but people are buying now to book you maybe two years down the line.

Of course, you may have some generous friends who are inspired by what you are doing and are willing to make a donation to you for nothing in return. Failing that - do a dinner party or a buffet party for 20 of your closest friends and charge them £25 per head (without drink). Persuade another friend who has a talent as a stand up comic or singer to come and entertain you all for free - or devise some party games to play. Aim to clear £400 profit on the night and have two or three of these each year.

Local churches

This is trickier depending on how supportive or otherwise the local church might be. You need to persuade them that they will be doing their bit for ecumenism by sponsoring you and ask them what they need doing that you could do in return - running a parent/difficult teenager group; visiting some elderly or sick in the parish; running an ecumenical group. Of course, they would usually get these things done by volunteers in the parish so you would have to persuade them that you could add value in a certain area and promise them something extra special when you are ordained, eg, a day's workshop on interfaith and reconciliation (plus a ticket to your ordination of course)

Local hospitals/hospices

For this you need a contact inside a Trust or Hospital - maybe someone in HR - someone who could tell you what kind of things they would be willing to pay for. Quite rightly they are going to be extremely careful about giving access to patients but what about their staff? Might they be open to an interfaith service for staff who are on duty at the weekend? Do they already have a chaplain? Find out and go and talk to him or her. In fact, you want to talk to them in the first instance. Get them on your side and ask them how to approach the authorities. Be careful not to undermine their position though.

Local schools/institutions

All educational institutions have their own budgets so you need to work out how you can get a piece of it! Offer to do an interfaith assembly for their multicultural pupils and then to work with some staff or students showing them how to put something like that together (say six one hour sessions over six weeks). Put together a calendar of all the major religious festivals, get the pupils to illustrate it, a local printer to print it (for nothing of course) then the school can sell it at Christmas. Get them to invest £250 for the package (assembly, sessions and calendar) or agree a different package with them for the same price. Then offer that same package to ten other establishments - that's a big chunk of your interfaith training paid for right there.

Local newspapers

Talk to your local newspaper about your interfaith training and offer to do them a monthly article for twelve months on things like:

- Spirituality in today's world
- Integrity in the workplace
- A series taking a different religion/tradition each month
- A write up of your visits to different worship services
- The place of love in the modern relationship
- Love and conflict in family relationships
- Spiritual practices for the busy person
- Finding meaning in a stressful life
- Spirituality v religion - the connections and the conflicts
- The Interfaith concept

See if you can get them to give you £1,000 over the year in monthly instalments. But you need to take them some samples of your article writing so they can see what they are getting. Why not offer to do a spiritual problem page for their readers - it might help here if you happen to be a counsellor or psychologist.

Planning the sponsorship meeting

Here is a suggested format for having that crucial meeting:

Set out a clear rationale

You need to be able to explain quickly and clearly what Interfaith is about, what Interfaith is and is not and why the world needs more Interfaith Ministers. Prepare something in writing to send them up front and leave with them after your meeting or get some interfaith brochures and use these.

Outline the benefits

The whole conversation must be slanted to the benefits they will gain from the services (not Services) you are offering. If you aren't sure what the benefits are then ask them - 'What can I usefully do to help you that would add value to your job or release you to do other things or help you to achieve your objects or solve a current problem that you have.....' You must first concentrate on what's in it for **them** before talking about your needs. Be creative in suggesting things they can add to their list of needs (create the need then show how you can fulfil it).

Be clear about what you are looking for

Let them know how much money you have raised so far and how much you still need - don't pussyfoot around with this but be open to negotiate.

Talk to the decision maker

If they need to get the funding signed off by someone else see if you can attend the meeting. No-one will be able to talk about this like you will. If that is impossible then do whatever you can to help your contact present your case - supporting literature, even overheads.

Identify the next step

Be clear about what the next thing is in the process for them to sign off funding. If they are unwilling to fund you, ask them what you need to do or offer so they would be prepared to fund you in some small way.

Keep the relationship sweet

Whatever the outcome, keep the relationship sweet and the contact open and regular. Maybe offer to do something on a volunteer basis while they get to know you. You never know when they might change their minds.

Finally - don't forget to trust in the Universe

Whatever you decide to do, remember these four important things:

- 1 **Have a clear intent** - make and re-make your commitment to Interfaith daily. Never entertain the thought that the lack of money will prevent you from doing the training. Re-affirm on a daily basis your willingness to do

whatever you need to do to raise the money. Adopt a perspective of abundance not lack.

- 2 **Make the space** - if raising money requires you to set aside some time, then do that now - the Universe may well be sending you openings and opportunities but if you do not have a place in your schedule for them, then you won't even be able to hear them knocking on the door.
- 3 **Raise your vibration** - making positive affirmations won't be as effective as raising your vibrational level through feelings. Feel your excitement and joy at doing your training and doing activities for sponsorship. Like attracts like in the natural work and once operating at the same level (that's why a bad day goes from bad to worse and a good day gets better and better - your feelings drive your vibrational level which calls in more of the same)
- 4 **Trust** - know that all will be fine - ask for help - be guided - be open.

Good luck and enjoy your training!

**Rev Geraldine Bown
(Ordained - 1998)**