

# SPONSORSHIP: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



---

BY MARY KATHRYN GRANT, PHD,  
AND SR. MARGARET MARY  
KOPISH, ASC, DMIN

*Dr. Grant is executive director,  
Ministry Leadership Development,  
and Sr. Kopish is director, Sponsor  
Services, Catholic Health Association,  
St. Louis. They were guest editors of  
this special section.*

---

**THE WORDS** “sponsor” and “sponsorship,” although they lack formal theological, canonical, or legal bases, connote a responsibility of trust, of attending to something sacred. The root meaning of the word “sponsorship” is derived from *spondere*—Latin for “making a solemn pledge.” Religious (of a certain generation) will recognize a related reference in the refrain from a hymn used in rituals of religious reception and profession, *Veni, sponsa Christi* (Come, Spouse of Christ).

As we strive to develop and articulate the theological foundations of sponsorship, we might reflect on what theological motifs surround the notion. Is sponsorship a theology of ministry? Of baptism? Of the laity? What biblical metaphor captures its essence? Is it in the image of a treasure in the field? The washing of the feet? Clay in the hands of the potter? Earthen vessels?

This special section offers a many-faceted view of sponsorship. From Rev. Daniel Conlin’s tracing of the origin of the concept through the literature (p. 20) to an overview of a recent collaborative initiative to identify the competencies or requirements needed for the next generation of sponsors (p. 24), the section offers insights, experience, practical concerns, and hope as we press forward in creative fidelity.

Other contributions to this special section include a discussion of juridic personality by Rev. Frank Morrissey (p. 27); Sr. Sharon Holland’s reflections on sponsors’ special role in continuing the healing mission of Jesus (p. 33); and a call to ponder sponsorship as a unique ministry by Mary Kathryn Grant (p. 38). Additional articles offer perspectives on the relationship of governance and sponsorship by Rev. David Nygren (p. 41); Sr. Olive Bordelon’s frank discussion of the demands of cosponsorship (p. 46) and a closer look at one newer public juridic person as it reaches its five-year anniversary by Laurie Fojut and David Shook (p. 48).

We offer these perspectives and thoughts to further the dialogue on the centrality of sponsorship in the continuing evolution and transformation of our health ministry. Indeed, we hold a treasure in earthen vessels ... ever trusting in the mercy and providence of our God.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

[www.chausa.org](http://www.chausa.org)

# HEALTH PROGRESS®

---

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, July-August 2001  
Copyright © 2001 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States

---