



BACK TO THE BASICS FORUM: Pastor Carroll Lang and Judy Lang



Pastor Carroll Lang opened the morning with having us imagine what it would have been like on that first weekend in Spain. The purpose was to get men active in the church. He then shared that 40 years ago, in

1972, the Cursillo movement came to the United States and both Florida and Iowa held weekends. Each community did not know the other one existed and each had their own practices. From this, Pastor Carroll saw a pattern and began to accumulate what each community was doing alike. This would be seen as the essentials of a weekend. He referred the participants to specific pages (sections 2-5a through 2-5g) in the notebook. The extras Pastor Carroll labeled as adiaphorous or optional items done on a weekend.

As noted, the optional activities are neither wrong nor right, but they are not *essential* to the purpose of the weekend. Since the NLS began in 1981, leaders in the movement have been calling us to get back to the basics with our weekends, Ultreyas and reunion groups. The question posed to the audience, “How are you doing to get back to the basics in your communities?”

Pastor Carroll shared a story about a new pastor. This pastor was approached by members of his congregation after he had given the same sermon three Sundays in a row. When asked why he had repeated his sermon yet again, the pastor replied, “Because you still haven’t acted on what I said the first time I told it.” Carroll explained that once the essentials of a weekend are blurred by the adiaphorous, the purpose of the weekend is hard to see.

Judy addressed the community with a confession that as a math teacher it’s easy for her to get caught up in the details. She explained that sometimes you have to take a step back and look at the bigger picture to see what it’s all about. Judy encouraged people to read the article, “What is a Basic Weekend”, in the notebook. “The neat things that are done

out of love by the palanca team during the weekend should not stop, but neither should they be preserved... layer after layer of these activities crowd the schedule to the point of collapse.”

The Lang's encouraged all to take significant steps towards getting back to the basics, or they will be back at the next NLSAM repeating this forum!!! The following questions were given to the participants to discuss: *How are you going to get back to the basics in your VdC, your secretariat and your own life? What do you want to see happen? Who can you get to help you?*

Pastor Carroll and his wife Judy have been actively involved in Cursillo/VdC weekends since the 1970’s and are charter members to the NLS having been involved since its inception. Pastor Carroll served as the SD on the NLS board for three years and editor for 17 years. He has served over 100 weekends; nine on the outside and the rest with prison ministry. Pastor Carroll also lead a prison congregation from 1997 through 2009. Judy Lang served as the NLS secretary for three years. Carroll and Judy were married in 1964, have two married daughters and three grandchildren.



NLSAM 2012 covered in prayer



ENGAGING PASTORS Seminar



Pastor John Bradford, who made Rainbow VdC in 1980 and sat at the table of St. John, and Steve Gielda, who made Rainbow number 33 in 1998, sat at the table of Matthew, presented the seminar on Engaging Pastors.

It has been noted that some movements are perennially short of pastors, both to work weekends and to sustain a spiritual director role for the secretariat,

while other movements seem to have spares. This seminar/dialogue is aimed at exploring WHY those who are lacking, are lacking.

While we ponder that, it might be instructive to define the role of the Spiritual Director within our movements. We laity expect that they will 1) lead the faith and spirituality topics on the weekend 2) select weekend and Ultreya Spiritual Directors 3) attend our National Gathering 4) prepare reports/articles for our newsletters 5) assist in rector/weekend team selection 6) remind the secretariat of our ultimate goals, on an ongoing basis.



Best practices were discussed and listed: the Lay Director and the Spiritual Director should work together as a team to recruit and keep new pastors. Time and money (a meal) need to be invested in educating, developing and maintaining pastoral relationships; regular time needs to be devoted to staying in touch with pastors. Once recruited, invite the pastor, spouse and family to be part of your community; be willing to explore new ideas with new pastors; do NOT overuse the “really good ones”. Perhaps as part of the recruiting/defusing misconceptions process, invite a potential new pastor to come to a clausura. Encourage and show grace at doctrinal differences if they arise at “mixed” weekends. If a pilgrim’s pastor has not done a weekend, invite that pastor to clausura. In the interests of “refreshment,” consider allowing a spiritual director to work a weekend in a NONspiritual role. In light of being sensitive to pastors with many congregants involved in your movement, consider capping the number of them participating on a weekend at any one time. Consider having your secretariat budget a small stipend to be used to hire pulpit supply for a congregation whose pastor you will be borrowing to work a weekend.

In closing, power point summary slides of the 2012 Pastor Survey were passed out. They are also posted on the website.

Glen & Betty House traveled from Tennessee to attend the NLS Annual Meeting. Glen is a first time lay delegate from *Tennessee Lutheran Via de Cristo* in Region 6. Glen is attending the NLS Annual Meeting with his wife, Betty. Glen and Betty made their Via de Cristo pilgrimage in 2006. This was a mixed weekend. TN Lutheran is based in the Knoxville area in eastern TN and includes the area east to NC. TN Lutheran was instrumental in helping Notes of Grace Via de Cristo in the Nashville/Memphis TN and Huntsville, AL area get started. They are happy to reconnect with their friend, Maureen King, who was involved with Notes of Grace, but who has now moved to Colorado and become involved with Via de Cristo of the Rockies. Glen and Betty said that Maureen is a “treasure” and we are blessed to have her in our community.

Glen commented that he didn’t know what to expect at the annual meeting since he is a first time delegate but he thinks it is great and can see how it follows the Via de Cristo weekend. He said, “It is very intentional.” He said the accommodations are very good and that Regis is a great facility.

Glen has found the sessions to be interesting and it has been informative to hear about some of the problems that other groups have encountered and the approaches that they have taken to resolve them. The “Back to Basics” seminar was especially helpful. He also enjoyed the key note speech by Joe Nilsen and the key point that it’s not about the weekend but about the journey with Christ. He said surely the Holy Spirit is present because of how everything is tied together. Glen was impressed at how well the business meeting went and thus there was no need for an additional meeting on Saturday.

Glen and Betty worship at Christ Lutheran in Fairfield Glade, TN, which is a retirement community. Approximately 100 people are active in the Via de Cristo movement in their con-



gregation of approximately 400 people. They are active in their reunion group which is a mixed group which meets weekly every Monday for 1 hour. It’s a large group that starts with general announcements and prayers and then divides into smaller groups. Once a month they enjoy dinner at each other’s house.

Gary and Betty will be heading home on Monday. May God continue to bless them on their journey!

**THANK YOU
PASTOR
DOUG
GIVEN
For four years of
service**



Seminar: Strengthening the Fourth Day

Greg Engroff, International Lay Director of Walk to Emmaus and Executive Director of Upper Room Programs, presented a seminar on the dynamics of energizing our 4th Day communities. Greg discussed techniques he used to energize and re-focus 300 national and 97 international Emmaus communities to further God’s kingdom.



To begin, Greg reviewed some basics: the church is people, not a building; and our weekends exist to build Christian community. The essence of movements like VdC is that they are “defined by what (they are) in totality. They can’t be taken apart.” Greg also emphasized that to have a good weekend, all the essential elements have to be there and teams must focus on what is good for the pilgrims, not on what the team wants.

However, according to Greg, “Post-VdC is the hardest part of the movement.” Walk to Emmaus (WTE) realized this several years ago and began to emphasize the importance of staying active in the 4th Day. WTE communities are asked to sign a covenant with national that says that their leaders will belong to active reunion groups and that those folks will also attend ultreyas.

Greg presented several keys for strengthening the 4th Day:

- **Set the example from the top down.** “That was the hardest part for me,” Greg admits, “because it meant I had to start with myself.” WTE asked their national leaders to commit to reunion groups and Ultreyas. Some left their positions, but, eventually, the Spirit led committed people to those positions.
- **Empower leaders to lead with a servant’s heart.**
- **Remove the secrecy.** “When it doubt,” he emphasized, “tell them EVERYTHING.” Also, the best recruiting tool can be to invite people to come to ultreyas and reunion groups.
- **Standardize teaching materials.** Greg will provide PowerPoint presentations used in WTE to anyone who would like them. E-mail him at gengroff@upperroom.org.
- **Tell people why you do what you do and why you do it in the way that you do.** Give them notes, presentations, etc. Answer all their questions and if it’s a tough question, assume positive intent and answer it well.
- **Make a secretariat board position of 4th Day coordinator** who is responsible for helping people hook up with reunion groups and Ultreyas.

Greg noted that instituting these methods reduced WTE’s negative calls from about 95% of all calls to about 3% or 4%. He also explained that Methodist bishops have been formally encouraged to support WTE in their local congregations.



**NLSAM 2013
WEST PALM
BEACH
FLORIDA
JULY 25 - 28, 2013**



REMINDERS.....

- **VERY IMPORTANT:** Dorm access card and room key: There is a **\$35.00** (lost key) and **\$35.00** (lost security pass) replacement charge. Please return your key before leaving Regis.
- Have a great trip home and hope to see you in Florida in 2013!

Got a Question? A JOY to share?
A challenging situation? Need
NLS Information?

Website: viadecristo.org

OR

Contact NLS Executive Director,
Nancy Peterson:

excdirector.nls@gmail.com

651-249-7897

Getting to know your EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Nancy Peterson worships at Augustana Lutheran Church in West St. Paul, MN. She made her Via de Cristo weekend in August 1992 in St. Paul, MN going through the last co-ed singles weekend that Minnesota hosted.

Nancy grew up on the Canadian border by International Falls, MN and attended a small country church, Bethany Lutheran where her roots in Christ were seeded and nurtured. While in junior high and high school she served as church organist and taught Sunday School.

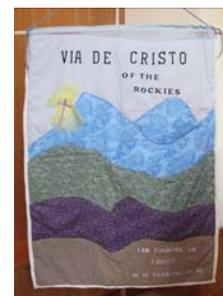
Nancy’s career has been centered on services to persons with disabilities where she worked in and ran group homes and day habilitation programs. Since 1996 she has been employed at ARRM, the Association of Residential Services in Minnesota, a private, not for profit association for providers of services to individuals with disabilities. Organizing all their events, from small workshops to large 3 day conferences with 1600 in attendance has been the core of her responsibilities. She states that she enjoys working with people and building relationships and has recently also taken over the member services responsibilities of ARRM. It has been a pleasure for Nancy to share her faith with people in this field of human services. Mission work has always interested her and as such, the support of colleagues was a blessing when Nancy was able to do mission work in Tanzania, East Africa in 2000 and 2004.

After working on a number of VdC teams, Nancy was elected to the Minnesota VdC secretariat. She served as secretary, assistant lay director, and liaison/Ultreya chair on the secretariat. Nancy attended her first NLSAM at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles in 2006 and has attended each one since then. Nancy cherishes the many friends she has made through this blessed ministry and looks forward to working with and for you – and for Christ as your Executive Director. Nancy believes God is in charge and that He clearly has a plan for the future of Via de Cristo and related Christian renewal movements. *“Thank you for the honor of serving as your first Executive Director. I am certain God will lead us in this ministry if we but keep the main thing and stop to hear His voice. Please pray for your Executive Board as they pray for you, your secretariats and weekends. May the Lord grant each of us His grace and love to share with others.”*



THANK YOU COLORADO!

Your hospitality, great weather, serving and dedicated spirit has made this one of the best NLSAM ever. May God continue to bless your communities with his grace and love!



Schedule for Sunday, July 29, 2012

Time	Event	Building	Location
6:30 a.m.	Breakfast	G: Stu Cntr	Dining Hall
8:00 a.m.	Worship	E: Regis	Chapel
11:00 a.m.	Check Out ends	F: West Hall	Door Rooms

CONEXIONES is the official publication of the National Lutheran Secretariat, a national association of the Via de Cristo (Way of Christ) movement, representing over 102,070 who have participated in 44 movements across the U.S. The purpose of this publication is to inform the delegates about the activities of the Annual Meeting.

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Best Practices Forum

Nancy Peterson, National Executive Director, facilitated small group discussions concerning the result from National Lutheran Secretariat surveys from several months ago. She reported 579 surveys were returned. The complete survey is on the National Via de Cristo website: viadecristo.org and click on survey results. Nancy then had the small groups discuss the following questions:

- ***What are you doing to attract younger people to VdC?***
- ***How do you keep people involved in VdC?***
- ***If you've served on team, would you do so again?***
- ***What are you doing to hold sponsors accountable?***
- ***How do you keep pastors connected to the 4th Day?***



Three tables were then invited to share responses to the following questions:

What are you doing to attract younger people? The following were their responses:

Connect with TEC participants and invite them when the time is right; make provisions to care for young children of candidates, have separate men's and women's weekends or provide caretakers.

What are you doing to hold sponsors accountable? The next table answered: have the sponsors and pilgrims pledge at the Clausura to connect with a reunion group, follow the sponsorship sheet that says the sponsor is responsible for pilgrim for one year post-weekend and they must be in a reunion group to sponsor a pilgrim

What are you doing to keep pastors connected with the 4th Day? The last table shared: invite them to Ultrayas, make sure SD's connect quickly with pastors who attend and invite them to serve as an SD on the next weekend, hold a pastor appreciation dinner for pastors in your district who attended a weekend and have your secretariat's SD write a newsletter column.



Pam & Gary Gross are lay delegates from *Living Water Via de Cristo in Moline, Illinois* and have been involved with Via de Cristo since 1997. This is the fifth NLSAM for Pam and the third for

Gary. Previous meetings that they have attended include INKY, AZ, MN and NC. They are members of Calvary Lutheran in Moline, IL. Pam has been a member of Calvary Lutheran for 55 years and Gary for 38 years! Both have been actively engaged in their weekly reunion groups since their VdC weekend in 1997. They also said approximately 25% of their home congregation are active in Via de Cristo.

The Grosses mentioned that they have enjoyed having more free time at the 2012 NLS Annual Meeting to process the information from the sessions, regional meetings and the small groups. Pam and Gary liked the seminar on "Back to Basics"; surprised to hear the difference between the 'essentials' vs. 'adiaphorous'. They agree it's important to find the balance.

Gary said, "Via de Cristo has been a real blessing in our lives, being part of it and helping others be a part of it, too." Pam added that it has been "Life changing". Pam and Gary have served on weekends and also on secretariat for their chapter.

Pam and Gary drove from Illinois and plan a few extra days to enjoy Rocky Mountain National Park and the Georgetown Loop before heading to I-80 to journey home. Vaya con Dios!

BUSINESS MEETING #3

Nancy Peterson, Executive Director, contact information: cell: [651-249-7897](tel:651-249-7897) and e-mail: execdirector.nls@gmail.com. The board will supervise Nancy's performance. For resources, viadecristo.org/share. Nancy has done a great job of making personal contact with each secretariat's lay director.

The budget was discussed and the delegation passed the proposed budget for the next fiscal year. Ed then led a prayer for wisdom and guidance in administration and execution.

Regional delegates gave summaries of the regional discussions. Regions will focus on energizing the 4th Day and recruiting young people. Region 7, Florida, talked about hosting the 2013 NLSAM.

Webmaster Rick Hanzlik spoke on the board's discussions concerning Twitter and Face book for our movement. Privacy, security and keeping it up to date are recurring issues. Lay dialogue has highlighted a common and recurring issue: the flow of information between NLS and the secretariats. If there are problems, e-mail Rick at webmaster@viadecristo.org.

Rev. Doug Givan reported on the 2012 National VdC Pastor Survey results. The complete results are posted on the VdC website: 71 pastors responded, 56 completed the entire survey. Those who made their weekends more than 5 to 10 years ago were the most likely to be involved with their secretariats. Those who had declined to serve within the last year claimed most often that was because of scheduling conflicts, health/medical problems or too busy.

Steve Gielda announced that the t-shirts worn by the Regional Outreach Coordinator "soldiers" can be ordered for \$15. That includes postage and a small donation to NLS. Give Steve your name/size/secretariat and payment before the end of the weekend. To save money, orders from each secretariat will be delivered to one address.