

Connecting National and Local Secretariats

CONEXIONES

Volume 21
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Nov. 2003

Official Publication of the National Lutheran Secretariat, VdC

NLS 2004 Annual Meeting July 24 — 27, 2004 in Knoxville, Tennessee



**”COME SEE WHY THEY CALL THIS
GOD’S COUNTRY! ”**

We invite all of you to visit us next July 22-25 in Knoxville, Tennessee, when the Tennessee Secretariat hosts the 2004 National Meeting. It promises to be a rewarding, enriching and renewing experience for all. We have two spiritual directors who are assisted by two Worship Chairs and one dynamite music chair; so you know this will be a spirit filled weekend. The location, too, lends itself to worship and reflection. Johnson Bible College, the site chosen for the Meeting, is located in a pastoral setting in east Knox County, near the confluence of the Holston and French Broad Rivers. The dorms feature semi-private suites, each with two bedrooms and two baths. The dorms, our meeting room, cafeteria and chapel are all in close proximity to each other, yet the surroundings provide plenty of opportunities for a pleasant place to stroll, fellowship and reflect.

As noted in the previous newsletter, there will be some limitations that we need to share with you. If you are a smoker, please know that this is a smoke free campus. That means that no where on the campus is smoking allowed including the grounds.

We Knoxvilleans are known for our Southern hospitality, so you won't likely be disappointed with the courtesy and special amenities that are certain to be present throughout your stay. Since Knoxville is within 500 miles of half the population of the United States (although maybe not half the Lutherans), many of you may choose to drive. We're easy to find, as both I-75 and I-40 run right through the city. If you arrive by air, our airport is newly redesigned; it features a waterfall and bear carving as well as state of the art security.

As of this writing, the National Board has not yet met to plan the agenda for the National Meeting. Preliminary e-mails have indicated lots of excitement and maybe even a few sur-

prises. Watch for the registration materials early in 2004!

Of course, you'll want to explore even more of the area. The Smoky Mountains, Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, American Museum of Science and Energy, Dollywood and outlet shopping are just a few of the special attractions you will want to enjoy during an extended stay. Churches, too, are a major part of the landscape. Guests are always made to feel welcome, and since Via de Cristo has touched the lives of many here across congregations and even denominations, you would be likely to meet a fellow Cursillista.

So, mark your calendars now for our National Meeting on July 22-25, 2004 in Knoxville, Tennessee; and see for yourself why they call this God's Country.

—Jan Larson, 2004 National Meeting Chair

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CONEXIONES is the official publication of the National Lutheran Secretariat, a national association of the Via de Cristo (Way of Christ) movement, representing over 67,000 who have participated in 34 movements across the U.S. Via de Cristo is a Lutheran expression of Cursillo®, a renewal movement developed within the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1940s. The Lutheran movement had its beginning in Florida and Iowa in 1972. The purpose of this publication is to inform all members of each NLS affiliated secretariat, ELCA bishops and the Directors of the Division for Ministry and the Division for Ministry in Daily Life about the activities of the National Lutheran Secretariat and its affiliated secretariats. Subscriptions to the above are free. If you know one of the above is not receiving **CONEXIONES**, call Larry Whitham as the numbers listed on the side.

Subscriptions for the general public are \$6.00 per year, and are available by sending your name, complete mailing address, and phone numbers to **CONEXIONES** Editor, Diane Purcell, 8303 Ingleside Ave. So., Cottage Grove, MN 55016-3236; (651) 459-7249 (H); or by fax: (651) 768-0624

Material for CONEXIONES

If you have information for **CONEXIONES**, items, requests and/or information, address corrections, changes or additions - even inspirational bits - send them to the **CONEXIONES** Editor at the address on the side. **DEADLINES:** January 1 for February (Late Winter) edition; April 1 for May (Spring) edition; August 15 for September (Annual Meeting) edition and December 1 for December (Winter) edition.



Outreach to New Movements

Ron Millard
Outreach Vice President



NEWS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT OF OUTREACH

Let us Give Thanks

Happy Thanksgiving! May this holiday season be a special time for you to reflect on the many blessings you have.

As I think about some of the blessings I have in my life, Via de Cristo certainly comes to mind.

Each of us has seen our Lord work in mighty ways on a Via de Cristo weekend. We have seen lives changed and witnessed many mountaintop experiences. We have felt the joy of being showered by God's grace. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Each of us awakens every day to the many new opportunities He has waiting for us. The opportunity to help another brother or sister, to witness the good news, to worship our God freely, to read a Bible, to spend time with our families, to smell a flower, and to say a prayer. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Yes, we all live in a fast-paced, stress filled world. Life can be hectic and pressure packed. Time is precious. But remember my brothers and sisters; God has called us to leave the masses – to follow the Master. He asks only for our willingness. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

We have so many reasons to be thankful. Take a few moments and think about the blessings you have in your life. Let us always take time to give thanks. Christ is counting on us!

God loves you and so do I,
Larry Witham
NLS President

New Movement Activity

Although there have been a couple of areas of the country where interest in starting a new movement has dwindled, new areas of opportunities continue to present themselves. I now have contacts in Portland, OR and San Francisco, and with a few more interested people/helpers in those areas, Via de Cristo could expand into these new territories. These are in addition to the others described on our web site. If anyone reading this has knowledge of folks who live in or near Portland or San Francisco that have made a Via de Cristo weekend, please let me know at ron@ssi.net.

Our four new movements for this year have done quite well. Prairie Sunshine VdC (Jacksonville, IL), Light in the Desert VdC (Las Vegas), Taste of Grace VdC (Chicago suburbs), and River's Edge VdC (St. Louis) have completed successful weekends and already have future weekends planned.

Long Range Planning

At the annual NLS meeting in Columbus in July, it was resolved that Outreach be responsible for coordinating a long range planning committee to examine NLS issues. It was also determined the scope of this committee would include the following:

- Analyze our annual meeting to determine future directions
- Analyze and suggest changes in our governance; officers and board
- Analyze our suggest changes to our delegate apportionment
- Analyze NLS organizational and operational changes as suggested by Tim Johnson of Texas

The NLS executive board compiled a list of people, those highly knowledgeable in the workings of the NLS, in order to select three long range planning committee members. Those selected were Leona Fox, Randy Mullin and Phil Lustig. They have already begun their tasks, and are to report back to the outreach coordinator and then the general assembly at next year's meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee. Who knows what the NLS and/or annual meeting will look like in the future!? With God's help, changes for the improvement of the NLS will be forthcoming.

In His Mighty Grip,
Ron Millard, Outreach VP

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD - August 2003

By Mike Swecker

"We believe God led us here" was the daily unspoken mantra of 4 motorcycle couples as we carved our way through 5,600 miles of Gods creation. Six of the 8 people were cursillistas. The other two will be soon. Eagerly engaging in "divine appointments", the Kalifornia Kids, as we called ourselves, were blessed by daily opportunities to share our faith with others. We were equally blessed by the awesome beauty of God's creation that is so obviously amplified on the back of a motorcycle as all of ones senses are employed to...scarcely take it in!



Mike & Julie Swecker Mary & Howie Nelson Linda & Steve Hurst Carolyn & Bob Sjoquist

Our journey had us climbing through breath taking mountain passes in 8 different states. We touched the clouds! We also descended into valleys where the smoke from forest fires eclipsed the sun. We enjoyed hot coffee in the fog on the ferry crossing to Vancouver Island. And who can forget the tunnels of shade as we wove our way through the giant Redwood trees that dwarfed our presence or the thundering contrast of the surf crashing into the quiet curving cliffs along the Pacific Coast Highway from British Columbia to San Francisco. There were spectacular horizons of rolling prairie and there was the quiet loneliness of a seemingly endless desert.

Paul's words in Romans 1 would resonate in our hearts, as we would share with each other through our radio intercoms what we were experiencing..."How could anyone deny the existence of God!" Paul says in Romans 1:19-20 *"For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts. From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God"*.

As spectacular as the scenery was, the real memories were the people stories along the way. Each morning before we departed our motel, we would stand in a circle by our motorcycles, hold hands and pray. These prayers always included requests for safe travel as well as for divine appointments for that day. Being true to His Word, God always provided for both! Wherever we stopped, our Christian t-shirts, motorcycles, and our ministry logo 2 Cor 3:17 always drew attention and provided us with opportunities to visit, share and even pray with people. From families and newly weds to pastors and waitresses, God provided us with opportunities to "make a friend, be a friend, and bring a friend to Christ."

One moment that stands out to me came as a result of our group's habit of leaving a ministry calling card for each of our waiters or waitresses. On the back of each card we would write a note of encouragement and a scripture verse that we felt led to give them. Then we would leave the card with our tip.

One divine appointment had us "off schedule" (yeah sure!) as a result of a route change and detour. We stopped for lunch in a small town in Wyoming. That's where we met our waitress, Jodi. She had just moved from Texas to "get away" from her past. She seemed to be struggling and wasn't sure anymore about her relationship with the Lord. We left her a ministry card with a note that said, *"God loves you very much. Everyone runs from something at sometime. Run to the Father who loves you!"* We also left her a used pocket sized, New Testament Bible. We pointed out to her a prayer that included Rev 3:20 which says, *"Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends."* As we were leaving the restaurant, one of the women in our group went back to put a tip on the table and Jodi was standing there with the card and the Bible in her hand sniffing. When asked if she was going to be okay she nodded yes. Somewhere in Yellowstone, God placed it on our heart to send Jodi a Life Application Study Bible. So on our first Sunday back at Hosanna we all met at the bookstore to write a personal note inside the cover of the new Bible and sent it to Jodi with a promise from God that He will complete what he has begun!



This is just one of many stories that this group could share. Yes, there was some obvious evangelism going on during our trip. Its more important to note however that there was much more evangelism going on that wasn't so obvious. I say this because of the spiritual integrity, grace and kindness of the people I was traveling with. They are a reflection of many of you. The culture of the Via de Cristo! They reflect *Piety ...Study...and Action* with and without words. They all love the Lord very much. They are all in different renewal groups and Bible studies. They all have different gifts that they use to serve the community. With this in mind is it any wonder that...*we believe that God led us here today!*

ADVENTURES IN THE JOURNEYS OF LIFE

Do you have a story that you would like to share with the community that reflects *Piety, Study and Action* in your life? We'd love to hear from you and be encouraged in our walk with the Lord. All articles are subject to editing and space permitting. It has always been the policy to grant permission to any secretariat wishing to reproduce an article from Conexiones in its newsletter, in fact, it is encouraged. The NLS Executive Board only asks that you print the article as is and list the author and source (Conexiones, or credit at end or beginning of article).

THANKSGIVING REFLECTIONS

Thanksgiving

”Thoughts on how to observe Thanksgiving ”

Count your blessings instead of your crosses;
 Count your gains instead of your losses.
 Count your joys instead of your woes;
 Count your friends instead of your foes.
 Count your smiles instead of your tears;
 Count your courage instead of your fears.
 Count your full years instead of your lean;
 Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
 Count your health instead of your wealth;
 Count on God instead of yourself.

--- Anonymous



George Washington’s 1782 Thanksgiving Proclamation expresses beautifully the utter dependence on God of our Founding Fathers, the Continental Congress, and the earliest leaders of our government. With these words, President Washington gives credit to God for every victory and success experienced by the fledging country of America. His expressions of gratitude amount to a virtual grocery list of the blessings of the Almighty upon the country.

It is being the indispensable duty of all Nations, not only to offer up their supplications of ALMIGHTY GOD, the giver of all good, for His gracious assistance in a time of distress, but also in a solemn and public manner to give Him praise for His goodness in general, and especially for great and signal interpositions of His providence in their behalf. They do further recommend to all ranks, to testify to their gratitude to GOD for His goodness, by a cheerful obedience of His laws, and by promoting, each in His station, and by His influence, the practice of true and undefiled religion, which is the great foundation of public prosperity and national happiness.

— George Washington, 1782

The season of Thanksgiving is here. It is the season of the year when we look for our blessings and give thanks to our creator God for those blessings. Do we really count our blessings or just take them for granted? What am I thankful for? I am thankful for my wife of nearly 45 years. She makes my days a joy and we share together our love for each other. I am thankful for my three girls and their families. They are truly a blessing to me as we share together in family. We will all gather together this Thanksgiving Day for a meal together and I am excited about all of us being together.

I am thankful for the church that I am serving. They have been a marvelous joy in my life and I appreciate the acceptance that I been given. We have some tough decisions to make and I pray that God will show us the way. It is truly an exciting time for this church.

I am thankful for my health and I pray for my wife’s health. We have had a lot of sickness in our lives lately, for the least two and half years. I am overjoyed that we are seeing progress and hopefully will see a clean bill of health. We keep praying and the Lord keeps us faithful.

I am thankful for my reunion group. We have been together since 1995 and we have grown in the last few years. To a level of seven men all of whom I am very proud to call my brother. We seem to feel very comfortable with each other and we share very openly. They are a joy to my soul and I thank God for each one of them every day, I have been blessed.

I am thankful for the Via de Cristo and for the work that we are all doing together. Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified and risen for the grave all for my sins. I am forgiven and made right with God because He loves me and wants me to be in His flock.

I am more than thankful for a God who loves me and cares for me and for all of His children. We serve a truly awesome God. I love the song; Our God is an Awesome God@. I realize that we live in His created world with His Son as our Savior and that I am bought and paid for, not of my own will but by the will of my Father God.

My friends in Christ we are blessed with more than we know and I think that we should be thankful. Look at all the blessings that I have been privileged to have and I am not alone. We have all been blessed with the love of God and with the love that we share with each other. Together we all share in the blessings of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, have a blessed Thanksgiving and give thanks to the Lord for He is good!

God Bless,
 Pastor Larry Llewellyn,
 National Spiritual Director



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- February 2004 - Minnesota: **Lutheran VdC of Minnesota-North**, Peace, New London; Men's #427, Feb. 5-8 & Women's #428: Feb. 12-15, Send palanca to: Ann Taylor 1070 Lakewood Dr. No. Maplewood, MN 55119
- February 2004 - Maryland: **Vineyard VdC**, Coed #4 Feb 12-15, Send palanca to: Sara McCall PO Box 254 Smithsburg, MD 21783
- February 2004 - North Carolina: **Eastern NC VdC**, Mixed #47: Feb. 12-15, Send palanca to:Vicki McCombs P O Box 760 Rockwell, NC 28138
- February 2004 - South Dakota: **South Dakota VdC**, Men's: Feb. 12-15 & Women's: Feb. 19-22, Send palanca to: Margaret Svitak 86238 559th Ave Randolph, NE 68771-6004
- February 2004 - Texas: **TX Luth VdC**, *Coed #50 Feb. 19-22, Send palanca to: Mark Clayton 181 Notchleaf Cibolo, TX 78108
- *Please note: Spanish Language weekend, Palanca in Spanish appreciated.***
- March 2004 - Colorado: **Colorado VdC**, Men's #17: March? & Women's #17: March?, Send palanca to: Gerry & Karen Givens 5440 Silver Drive Colorado Springs, CO 80918
- March 2004 - IA/IL: **Living Waters VdC**, Men's #29: Mar. 4-7 & Women's #29: Mar. 4-7, Send palanca to: Tom & Theresa Oloffson 122 E 2nd St. P.O. Box 207 Wyanet, IL 61379
- March 2004 - Minnesota: **Lutheran VdC of Minnesota-South**, Zion, Stewarton; Men's #429, Mar. 4-7 & Women's #430: Mar. 11-14, Send palanca to: Ann Taylor 1070 Lakewood Dr. No. Maplewood, MN 55119
- March 2004 - Wisconsin: **Wisconsin SonRise VdC**, Men's #43, Mar. 4-7 & Women's #43: Mar. 11-14, Send palanca to: Rhonda Knudtson 439 Jefferson Dr. Kewaskum, WI 53040
- March 2004 - Arizona: **AZ Lutheran Cursillo**, Men's #97: Mar. 11-14 & Women's #98: Mar. 25-28, Send palanca to: Roy Heitkamp PO Box 5171 Peoria, AZ 85385-5171
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March 2004 - Tennessee: **TN Lutheran VdC**, Mixed (coed) #11: Mar. 18-21, Send palanca to: Debra Wainner 100016 Gate Post Way Knoxville, TN 37931

April 2004 - Louisiana: **Louisiana VdC**, Coed: April 15-18, Send palanca to: Edna Hurling 1106 Birdsong Rd. Lafayette, LA 70507

April 2004 - Florida: **Heart of Florida VdC** Men's #29: April 22-25, Women's #29: April 29-May 2, Send palanca to: Sheila Bender % St John Lutheran Church, 1600 S. Orlando Ave Winter Park, FL 32789

April 2004 - Illinois: **Taste of Grace VdC**, Men's #3: April 22-25, Women's #3: April 29-May 2, Send palanca to: Amy Prior 16801 Blackfoot Dr. Lockport, IL 60441

April 2004 - Maryland: **Vineyard VdC**, Women's #13 April 22-25, Send palanca to: Sara McCall PO Box 254 Smithsburg, MD 21783

April 2004 - Georgia: **Atlanta VdC**, Coed #18: April 29 - May 2, Send palanca to: Mike & Anna Seden 1310 Wood Park Dr. Kennesaw, GA 30152

April 2004 - North Carolina: **Eastern NC VdC**, Mixed #48: April 29 - May 2, Send palanca to: Vicki McCombs P O Box 760 Rockwell, NC 28138

May 2004 - Maryland: **Vineyard VdC**, Mixed #13 May 13-16, Send palanca to: Sara McCall PO Box 254 Smithsburg, MD 21783

May 2004 - Minnesota: **Lutheran VdC of Minnesota-Metro**, Trinity, Stillwater; Single Men's #431, May. 20-23 & Single Women's #432: May. 27-30, Send palanca to: Ann Taylor 1070 Lakewood Dr. No. Maplewood, MN 55119

June 2004 - Colorado: **Colorado VdC**, Coed #18: June?, Send palanca to: Gerry & Karen Givens 5440 Silver Drive Colorado Springs, CO 80918

June 2004 - Minnesota: **Lutheran VdC of Minnesota-Metro**, Christ the King, New Brighton; Women in Transition #433: June. 24-27, Send palanca to: Ann Taylor 1070 Lakewood Dr. No. Maplewood, MN 55119

June 2004 - Wisconsin: **Wisconsin SonRise VdC**, Coed #4: June. 24-27, Send palanca to: Rhonda Knudtson 439 Jefferson Dr. Kewaskum, WI 53040

July 2004 - Minnesota: **Lutheran VdC of Minnesota-North**, First Lutheran, Bemidji; Men's #434, July. 22-25 & Women's #435: July 29-Aug. 1, Send palanca to: Ann Taylor 1070 Lakewood Dr. No. Maplewood, MN 55119

What is the real purpose of Palanca?

In a article that was written by Rev. Carroll Lang and published in the May 2000 Issue of the Conexiones, we find the following information. *Palanca is Prayer. Palanca is not a trinket or knick-knack or any other item no matter how lovingly made. Palanca is prayer. It is the actual taking time out at times that may be entirely "inconvenient" to pray for all who are attending the weekend. Palanca is not even intended to be directed at individuals. Palanca is meant for the entire weekend community.*

The entire article can be found on the web.

Palanca Using the Web

Palanca information is both important and needed in a timely fashion. To meet the need for quick distribution we are using the world wide web (Web) to our benefit. The Web can get information out to everyone interested including Secretariat Palanca Coordinators in a timely manner. It is also the most cost effective way for the National Lutheran Secretariat (NLS) to reach the large number of people interested in supplying Palanca for the many weekends. Each Palanca entry contains not only the weekend information and the Secretariat name, but it also includes a contact to send much needed Palanca to. To keep up to date you should review the list on a frequent basis. The list is updated at least once per month and sometimes more often.

When sending Palanca, distribution needs to be soon enough to allow Palanca to reach the contact at least 1 to 2 weeks prior to the weekend in question. The NLS does realize that not everyone has access to the Web but given the need for timely information and the costs involved in distribution, there are no alternatives that meet this need except the Web. We would ask that if anyone needs access to this information in your Secretariat, you feel free to print the lists and assist in getting local distribution of the data.

As far as what to supply as Palanca, there are a few simple guidelines. Palanca should represent both prayer and sacrifice. Before creating Palanca, we suggest that you pray for each team and the pilgrims attending the weekend. We recognize that all that is done on weekends is done by God and not by man. One meaningful suggestion is personal notes identifying yourself and your connection to the person and/or the weekend. The meaning of your sacrifice in spending time in creation and prayer for a weekend or an individual can be a wonderful and potentially defining moment for attendees.

If you ever have any questions or comments on Palanca, I am happy to receive them. You can reach me by sending email to mcarnes@greenspeedisp.net

Mark Carnes
NLS Palanca
Coordinator



NLS Distribution Center

Richard Emery, Director Phone: (239) 590-8958
E-Mail: ricisa@aol.com

Annual Meeting Items Available

Dick Emery announces that all the material that was available at the 2003 Annual Meeting and video tapes from the meeting are available from the Distribution Center, as well as the shirts and the material that are on the order form.



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— NLS Executive Board



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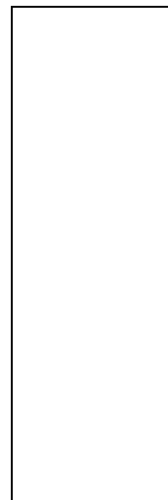
CONEXIONES-ON-THE-WEB

Are you interested in saving the NLS money? Please sign up to receive the E-Mail Notification by filling out the E-Mail Notification Request Form. How this works is that you will receive an email notification when the latest edition of the Conexiones has been posted on the NLS Web Page. You then can view the newsletter at your leisure and chose to copy it.



Judy Laabs-Foss
4495 Margaret Street
White Bear Township, MN 55110-3773

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