

Remembering a Via de Cristo Founder: Luther Piel

On January 15, 2022, Luther Piel, one of the first leaders of Via de Cristo, finally “went home” to his Father. As we celebrate 50 years of Via de Cristo, it is good to reflect on the life of a man who helped share this gift with all of us.

Luther was an exemplary servant to Christ and an inspiration to the whole Via de Cristo community. As a retired Air Force Colonel, from the time he made his weekend with the Atlanta community he owned his mission. He understood that “Christ is counting on you” because he was “counting on Christ.” He knew better than most how Jesus works to transform environments for Christ. He grew to be one of the most knowledgeable leaders within all the Cursillo® movement and could always be counted on to offer “any and all” assistance. A small example: When someone discovered too late that they had forgotten to order crosses, he insisted on personally delivering them, on time, for a closing several states away.

Many secretariats will find Luther’s contributions in their histories, serving on startup teams, providing training, and being a true friend long years after their serving together. As a pilot and aircraft inspector, at his own expense, he would show up for team meetings as far away as Pittsburgh, and Arizona.

Nationally, during the formation of the National Lutheran Secretariat, he, along with Greg Steele, is respected for serving as lay founding officers, swapping terms as president. Working with Carol Lang and Paul Schmidlin, he saw to the completion of the NLS Essentials Manual, our go-to guidelines for secretariats, and the Team Formation Manual, instrumental in new movement startups. While rarely happy with his writing, he could share eloquently (often profoundly) in personal conversations and in public addresses.

Luther and Phyllis continued to be active with the Good News! Community in SE Michigan (summer) and with Florida communities (winter) long after their regular retirements.

Luther is survived by his daughter, Becky Piel; granddaughter, Jessica Piel. Preceded in death by his parents; first wife, Phyllis in 2002; second wife, Violet in 2014; son, David; and siblings, Gerhardt, Hilbert, Hildegardt, Thelma, Theodore, Ruth, and Walter.

We are grateful beyond expression for how our Lord Jesus gifted our brother Luther. We pray a sincere “Thank You Lord!” for all he accomplished on our behalf!