



SATURDAY MORN-  
ING WORSHIP

Pastor Gary Heltsley from Mt Olive Lutheran Church, La Crescenta, CA presided over the morning worship service. The gospel lesson came from John 21:15-17.



Even the morning mist could not dampen the worship coming from Seaver Hall. We gathered once again for singing and a lesson from God’s Word. This is the day we add the word “GO” to our weekend, completing our weekend theme: “KNOW – GROW – GO”.

Pastor Gary reminded us of Jesus’ words and instruction to carry out the great commission. “Go”, Jesus said, “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, go and tell of the things which you see and hear.....I desire mercy not sacrifice.”

Pastor Gary made it clear the word “go” is synonymous with “act”. As God’s people we need to stop waiting for the perfect moment and just get going. We need to make sure our confession is true and that when we make Jesus the Lord of our life it really means something.

Jesus warned his disciples often, that if all they were doing was proclaiming the word it would not be enough. They, and we need to be doers of the faith...“practicing Christians”.

When we step out in faith, when we answer His call to “go”, He promises to be with us always. We never go alone. We can’t wait until the circumstances are just right. We just have to step out.

God has given us a treasure, we need to not keep it to ourselves, but share it .....use it.....live it.....give it. “GO” in peace and serve the Lord!



REGION  
TO  
REGION



New this year was time set aside for the delegates to meet within Regions to discuss how to support each other. These eight national regions, designated by the NLS, had the opportunity to meet and discuss several thought-provoking areas. Each region was asked to consider “what matters most”? The most common response among the Secretariats as well as the region through email, website, and Ultreyas. Florida has 7 secretariats and has held 2 Grand Ultreyas. These meetings transform “7 segmented Secretariats into 7 conjoined” areas. Most secretariats are faced with the challenge of distance-one area is separated by 1000 miles. Suggestions were made to establish a regional contact to organize the sharing of resources, ideas, and general communication between the Secretariats.

Other challenges include 4<sup>th</sup> Day support and follow-up. Several regions expressed the need for sponsor training, emphasizing the importance of the sponsor as a mentor and pilgrim support following a VdC weekend as well as before the weekend. Support of areas that do not have established Secretariats was discussed as well as assistance with increasing the number of weekends in the areas finding it difficult to support but a few weekends a year. Participants felt the meetings were time well-spent, identifying issues of concern and establishing plans to address the issues identified. Watch for more developments in future Conexiones issues.

### “Ron’s Heart, Our Soul”

When Pastor Charlie Carlson mentioned his affinity for the song “Heart and Soul” in our worship Thursday afternoon, it was more than mere anecdote—it was a not-so-subtle nod to the budding talent of **Ron Ragsag**, keyboardist on our music team this weekend. Ron is already well known among the Southern California VdC Cristoistas as a frequent member of the core music teams, but his approach to service, as reflected in the song, continues to be quite humble and easy-going. “**Heart and Soul**” was originally written specifically for VdC #25 in Frasier Park, and when Ron was commissioned by the head musician to write a song, Ron went directly to the two things in his life he seeks for greatest inspiration: his Bible and his wife.



With the help of Lynnea, his wife, and the general theme of service for the weekend, Ron began assembling a list of Bible verses with service-related language. The foremost of these verses was Luke 10:26-27: “*Jesus replied, ‘What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?’ The man answered, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*” But it wasn’t until Ron sat down at the piano and began combining the words with chords that an actual song, his first, began to develop. This synthesis of lyrics and piano represents Ron’s approach to music, and explains why the melody of “Heart and Soul,” a light, breezy mixture of praise and worship styles akin to “The Prayer to the Holy Spirit,” is not accidental. Ron’s first published recording of the song was immediately accepted by the core team of VdC # 25, and it was at that point that “Heart and Soul” became a part of the Southern California secretariat’s music catalog.

Ron says he first wanted to incorporate the theme of community into the lyrics. Based on his prior experience in VdC, he knew he wanted a short song with the clearest and simplest language possible that started off slow and built to a satisfying climax. The “bridge” section of the song, he says, does just that: it breaks up the repetitiveness of “verse-chorus-verse,” and changes the momentum of the song so that it gets loud then ends. This tempo was a perfect lead into the “Fourth Day” Rollo, before which this song was sung on VdC # 25.

Ron’s work continued past that weekend and continued with “Search Me,” which he wrote as head musician for VdC # 27 near Bakersfield. This song is based on Psalm 139 and has more of a rock-and-roll feeling to it. Ron may have plenty of material to draw on in his new band, “Feed the Five,” named for the Gospel parable of Jesus’ feeding five thousand followers. “Feed the Five” is composed entirely of VdC Cristoistas. The only problem is that the band membership is spread out over all of Southern California, from Bakersfield to Orange County! Ron asks for your prayers that the band continue to survive and do well at the next “Fish Fest” contest, a survey of current, well-known Christian rock bands and up-and-comings.

Ron speaks well of his wife, whom he says always gives 110% and is his best critic. Ron came from a Catholic, Filipino background and married his wife, a Lutheran, and began attending church with her. Without a doubt, his heart and soul belong to God, and we are glad he worships with us!

### REKINDLING THE FIRE (Grouping and Ultreyas)

**Lori Azevedo** presented an excellent seminar on how to rekindle the fire in our lives. She gave a personal witness as to how she had found that the fire had died in her life and how she was able to rekindle the flame. It was through her groupings and the care of friends that she was able to get the help she needed.



In order for us to rekindle the fire, we first need to know what put the fire out. In today’s technological world there are so many distractions. Our lives are divided into “micro bits”, i.e., computers and internet, cell phones, I Pods, etc. All of these “time saving” devices actually cut into our personal time with our loved ones and with our God. If we want to reach out and touch someone, we need to get personal, not just “text messaging” or emailing. We can all get consumed by work and other influences in our lives and lose our connection. A lot of opportunities are lost by these daily distractions. If God is not first in our lives then we are lost.

Lori shared we are able to affect and change a life by what we say and do. We can all be the hands and feet of Christ. We cannot BE God, but we can show others how to find God.

Don’t be too **BUSY** to not be involved in Groupings and Ultreyas. Ultreyas are meant to be a time of learning and sharing. Remember **BUSY** is “Being Under Satan’s Yoke”.

### 2007 NLS — INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Mark you calendars for **July 26-29, 2007** when we will be enjoying Hoosier hospitality! The host team has selected their theme from Hebrews 12:1b-2a, “*Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.*” Watch for more information in the upcoming Conexiones.



## The ABC's of VdC

What are the "essentials" of a Via de Cristo weekend? **Max Turner** of California addressed the key points of a VdC weekend in today's seminar.



The Essentials Manual is designed to train leaders in the VdC method of renewal. The manual content, adapted from the Cursillo movement, contains Lutheran doctrine and emphasizes focus on essential facets. Fifteen "essentials" are listed: *Palanca, 72 Hours, Holy Communion, 5 Meditations, 14/15 Talks, Note Taking, Discussions, Posters, Decuria Sharing, Silent Retreat, Celebration of Repentance, Crosses, Closing, 4<sup>th</sup> Day, and Group Reunion/Ultreya.*

Additional components were also discussed that may be added to the essential components of the weekend. Although these additional components, such as mime, skits, Stations of the Cross, serenades, and a special banquet are valuable; Max cautioned against allowing these additions to "clutter" the essential components of a weekend. A lively interactive discussion followed prompted by a list of adaphorous items listed on the board.

What is really important about a weekend? The VdC Mission Statement states: "By grace, with the Holy Spirit, we challenge leaders to discover and achieve their personal calling, assisting them in influencing their environments with the gospel."

Participants were reminded that each weekend is based on prayer. The team is God's hands, eyes, and feet for the weekend. Focus must be on the pilgrims and not on outdoing other weekends. God, prayer, serving the pilgrims, and preparing the pilgrims for the 4<sup>th</sup> day must be the priorities.

The seminar provided an organized approach to planning a weekend as well as starting a new VdC movement with an "Essentials of VdC" CD given to everyone. Good job, Max!



## BUSINESS MEETING

President Larry opened Saturday's business meeting with Debbie Grazier leading us in an opening prayer. Larry noted that there was no old business left over from the Friday's meeting and asked if there was any new business from the floor.

None was called for. Larry stated at this time the various committees would present the reports. Tracy Schmidlin presented the Hosting an Annual Meeting committee report. Bill Byrd did the Lay Director's Dialogue report. The Long Range Planning/Visioning report was given by Bob Veres. Judy Laabs-Foss presented the Newsletter report. The Banners and Palanca report was given by Tim McCoy. Pastor Joe Nilsen presented the Spiritual Director's Dialogue report. Jerry Lemcke and Tim Ryan presented the Finance/Budget Committee report which consisted of the past statement of activity and the new budget for 2006/2007. The

delegates approved both documents.

Larry asked Tracy to give a brief overview of the Region-to-Region report. Larry requested that a poll be taken of the delegates who were receiving financial support for attending the NLS meeting, which most were. Larry asked the delegates if anyone would be interested in helping start the National Coordinator tasks. Please contact the Board if you are interested.

At this point in the meeting, INKY hosting the NLS Annual meeting for 2007 gave a wonderful presentation. Kim Bownlow provided a closing prayer and Larry closed the meeting. After the closing, the NLS banner was passed from the VdC of So California & the Central Valley to the new host committee of INKY.



## TAX TIME



**Diane Purcell** taught us that life is not always about #'s. We took a moment to catch our breath, said prayers for Keith's (Diane's brother-in-law) healing, and a Prayer to the Holy Spirit. This soon transformed into a room full of fact hungry people. Information, numbers, questions, and answers began flying around the room.

Diane explained that tax laws are always changing and this year is no exception. "Be on the lookout for new tax laws affecting non-profit organizations for the next several years" such as:

- 1) How you calculate gross receipts to determine if you'll need to file each year. It is better to file by the date stated on the "Statue of Limitations".
- 2) "In Kind" donations: Limits and when, where and how to report.

### Tax Tip:

- 1) "Abatement" Non-Profit organizations may be tax exempt, but that does not stop the IRS from assessing penalties for various actions or lack there of: such as "Late filing of a return" or "Not filing a return". If a penalty has been assessed you can write and ask for the penalties to be abate for reasonable cause, (when in doubt, e-mail Diane). But always remember, if you receive a letter from the **IRS**, "**RESPOND**" ASAP.
- 2) For donations of items: In your donation thank you letter, be descriptive of the item and never list a value for the item (we're not qualified appraisers).

A wealth of information was delivered in a short span of time. God's love of His people will deliver their needs, yes even in filing tax returns!

## THANK YOU!

As you read this newsletter, the NLS Annual Meeting for 2006 is becoming history. As the theme for the weekend stated: **Know, Grow, Go** and we did just that. The daily Conexiones is meant to be a motivating publication that you can take home to share with your renewal groups, Ultreya groups and local secretariats. The newsletter is a team effort and the California host team provided me with the following people who either took pictures, wrote the articles or proofed the material: *Melissa Aragon, Lori Azevedo, Karen Bennefeld, Dave and Lida Damien, Teresa Fackler, Nanette Helgager, Susan Layfield, Martha and Bob Pflieger, Donalee Townsend, and Alfred Valrie.* (I apologize if I forgot anyone.) *Kris Jones* (MN), *Bob Northrup* (Eastern NC) and *Lois Witham* (Western NC) also assisted me.

Your willingness to say **YES** is what makes this publication one of pride. Please remember that when you thank me for the results of the daily newsletter; I give all the praise to God and the team that he has provided to me. Thank you California for making me feel at home and Lord willing, I will return someday.

### REMINDERS:

\*Check out time on Sunday in the front of McCarthy Hall will be set up for 9:00 am to 11 am. First go to our Housing Chair table and then to the LMU check out table.

\*Verify your travel time to the airport with *Bonnie Boord*, our Transportation Coordinator.

\*You can just leave all linen and pillows in your room for Campus to clean up after we are all gone.

\*We have 2006 NLSAM T-shirts of all sizes available for purchase, see Martha Pflieger to get yours before you leave.

\*If you checked out a fan, please return it to Jennifer Nielsen when you check out.

It has been our pleasure and a blessing to serve all of you this weekend. Thank you for your spirit of charity and flexibility in providing services to you. We hope we have done our best to serve you and your needs. What a great group of delegates and guests we had to serve this weekend.

Your So. California & the Central Valley Host Committee.



### AGAPE DINNER

The evening began with the NLS Board Members receiving souvenirs as a way to remember their time in California. A feast of flavorful Italian food tantalized our palates and was topped off with an array of decadent desserts. The buffet style of serving allowed for everyone to be served in less than 20 minutes.

Our hearts and souls were treated to a chorus of live worship music, sung by Cristoistas from all areas of California. The Spirit was truly present in the voices and hands that filled the air. The evening ended with roars of laughter as Pastor Charlie read "Grandma's Letter" with a grand finale of the Conga Line sung to "I Walk by Faith"! A big praise and thanks to all those who gave of their time and talents and treasures to help make the 2006 NLS weekend a success!!!!!!



The daily newsletters are on the NLS website:  
[www.viade Cristo.org](http://www.viade Cristo.org)

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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 84,000 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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### Schedule for Sunday, July 30, 2006

Time	Event	Location	Building
7:00 a.m.	Worship	Chapel Rm. 100	Seaver Science Hall
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Main Dining Student Ctr	Malone Student Center
10:00 a.m.	Board Meeting	TBA	TBA
11:00 p.m.	CHECK OUT BY 11:00	Lobby in the dorms	McCarthy Hall