



Saturday Morning Worship

Saturday’s worship began with beautiful music from the Bethel Lutheran Praise Band (Noblesville, Indiana). This morning’s presiding minister was **Pastor John Propst**. **Melanie Doyon** from Grace & Glory Lutheran in Goshen, KY read this morning’s lessons (Isaiah 40:28-31 and Philippians 3:10-16) and Gospel (Luke 15:20).

Pastor Betsy Dartt, House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, set up today’s theme “let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us” in her homily. She began with telling us how VdC has effected her congregation; over half of her church council and one third of her congregation are very active members in INKY’s VdC community.

She continued with reminding us that we need to “run the race with perseverance”. She talked about a recent event at the county fair called “Mudding”, in which, cars and trucks race toward a pit of mud trying to be the fastest to get through the mud and to the other side. So at the starting line, the engines are revving, the crowd is cheering and excitement is in the air, they take off, then.....THUD!!! They have hit the mud, (the obstacles in our lives) the tires are spinning, the mud is flying, and the crowd continues to cheer as they persevere through the mud to win the race.



So, why is it that we run this race? We run it for those who have yet to come. They need an example of how it can be run in Christ’s arms, when he carries you.

What is the race? Well, it’s **not** about you, it’s about GOD. God sets the course, he equips us with the provisions that we need for the course which he has charted. God holds us up and supports us. The obstacles in our path are for growth and to be examples for others. God takes a hold of us, lifts us up along the way, and brings us back home!

The communion hymn was a very bluesy and amazing version of “Amazing Grace” sung to the tune of “House of the Rising Sun”.

We should always remember that our great gift and power is in God coming to us. So, get your engines revved up.



Saturday Night Vespers

Tonight’s music was led by St. Andrew’s in Speedway, Indiana. Then **Pastor Joyce Gerwing** of St. James in Greenfield, Indiana called us all to worship by centering ourselves in silence. Readings were done by **Joan Klotz** from Inky VdC.

Pastor Joyce Gerwing began the meditation with humor as she recounted how she got to her first VdC weekend. Under the impression that she was being asked out on a date by a man whom she was interested in, when asked if she had any plans the following weekend, she quickly responded, “well, no, I am free that weekend” to which he replied, “Great, there’s a VdC weekend that you can attend.” She begrudgingly attended the weekend and admits openly to being a “difficult” pilgrim. However, by the weekend’s end, she had seen the perseverance of her sponsor and realized that she was the one “who thought they needed it the least”. Since her weekend, she has been serving “penance” by glorifying God on 17 VdC weekends.



The perseverance of her sponsor exemplified to her the dogged determination we should have to achieve what God wants for us. She talked about the very gutsy woman from tonight’s reading, Matthew 15:21 – 28. She was a Gentile whose daughter was possessed by a demon. She knew that her daughter’s wholeness comes from God. She went to see Jesus and persevered to get close to him, she shouted after him. She was finally able to kneel before Him and say, “Lord, help me.” Christ didn’t initially help her, she persisted to which he finally responded, “Your daughter is healed; your faith has made her well.” Christ saw her faith in her perseverance. Our perseverance and faith our intertwined. Christ persevered for us first. If you place your trust in Christ, you will persevere in whatever race you choose.

Pastor **Joyce** ended her meditation with telling everyone the story of the cross on the altar made by **Jim Laidlaw** from Christ the King in Fishers, Indiana. The Cross is Jesus, the center dowel is Jesus’ heart, the base is you. The dowel at the base is your connection to Jesus. With your connection to Jesus you will be able to stand and have true balance in life. **Jim** blessed each of us with an individual cross. Included with each cross, is a castoff piece, which would normally be discarded. However, this weekend, we are blessed to take a piece of someone else home with us as the pieces were exchanged among the crosses. **Jim** refuses to sell the crosses or accept money for them, as he believes that the cross of Christ is not for sale.

SEMINAR #1 - CAUTION FLAGS

Bob Quam made his weekend in February 1993 in Minnesota. Since then he has served on several teams, has been a Rector and served on the Minnesota VdC Council for 4 and half years.

The term "detour" was used for struggles we face on the well paved and proven VdC track. Staying the course can be difficult for both secretariats as well as communities. Bob shared the following points and then opened the time for discussion.

**DETOURS:**1) Trials Of Miscommunication

Communication depends on a message, a sender and a receiver. The trials of miscommunication are not limited to just VdC. Bob shared examples of miscommunication even between Jesus and his 12 Disciples.

Some ways to stay on track are: read the *Essentials Manual*, assign responsibilities clearly, record procedures for future leaders, make use of liaisons, print newsletters and provide opportunities for phone and email communications when long distances are involved with team members.

2) Doing It My Way

Veering away from tried and true ways and letting non-essentials get in the way is one way we can find ourselves trying to 'personalize' weekends.

Some ways to keep on track are: make time for talks and discussions, stay with the 'essentials' in the manuals, additions must be approved, pray without ceasing, stay in touch with JESUS!

3) Insisting On Doing It The Way It Has ALWAYS Been Done

We get stuck in our ways and forget to make sure guidelines are standing the test of time. Doing that requires a calm, non-anxious presence within the leadership. Change triggers anxiety and anxiety triggers conflict. Bob noted examples such as Jesus being frowned at for questioning religious leaders and being condemned for healing on the Sabbath. While we should hold true to Jesus' example and not hold tight to the old just because it is the way it has always been done, remember to not lose sight of the goals either.

Some ways to stay on track are: update procedures every year, be sure changes are approved, and be certain of your reasons for the changes.

4) Using Narrow Criteria To Justify VdC Effectiveness

Bob quoted from **Mike Swecker**, coordinator of the Minnesota Secretariat. *"We place a high expectation on the Ultreya's and measure their success by attendance. We think we are failing when very few show up for an Ultreya. My experience shows that when I visit many of the churches that claim this, I find that those who have gone through VdC are, in fact, very involved in the church and other ministries."*

Remember... it's not QUANTITY, but QUALITY and do not be 'detoured' by desires of high numbers or better-than-the-last weekends.

REGION TO REGION

2007 marks the second year for Region To Region at the NLS Meeting. Just how did this "new" concept come about? In speaking with current NLS Board President, **Larry Witham**, it seems that this idea isn't quite as new as you might think. "The Long-Range Planning Committee gets the credit for birthing the idea," said **Witham**. **Randy Mullin**, Past NLS President and Visionary Committee member, among others, brought the idea to the NLS as a way for various regions to encourage and help other groups in their general area. It is intended to accentuate, not replace, what's already in place. Regions were set by the NLS with the idea of room for adjustment, if needed. The intent is for each region to meet at least one other time during the year beyond the NLS Meeting.

One example shared by **Witham** was Region 6. They set up a three day retreat at Luther Ridge in March, where they discovered that they could help and support each secretariat.

Saturday morning's Region to Region began with all meeting together in Ransburg Auditorium in order to share what they had done since the 2006 NLS Meeting in California. The following is a sampling of their reports:

Region 1: **Lida Damien** said that in yesterday's meeting the group discussed Leader's Training, the question of Spiritual Directors practicing their talks for the team, and background checks for those who serve on teen weekends.

Region 2: **Vi Christiansen** shared that as one secretariat in their region has struggled some, others have shared data bases so that 4th Dayers near the rebuilding movement may be able to assist them.

Region 3: **Cindy Perkins** said that their group enjoyed getting to know new people and hope to meet for more opportunities to share.

Region 4: **Jeff Wilcox** said that discussion items included declining attendance, what makes a viable weekend, and camp changing.

Region 5: **Steve Gielda's** group appreciated sharing about their unique issues and ideas. He spoke of the need for communication and the necessary action required for getting the mid-year meetings started. They hope to meet again before NLS 2008.

Region 6: **Vicki McCombs** reported on their region's March three day retreat for their mid-year meeting. The theme was "ONE IN THE SPIRIT". The themes of each of their three worship services were Piety, Study, and Action. She said that chatter abounded and "We learned so much even at coffee breaks!" Plans are set to meet in April 2008.

As NLS has unleashed the process of Region to Region, it's apparent that each unique region has used it in a way that suits their particular need. "It's a work in progress at the very beginning," Witham stated. The possibilities are endless for its fruit! May Region to Region continue to grow and support this wonderful movement!



Pastor Doug Givan posed a question to the group that was gathered. "What is meant by Spiritual Direction?" We had a large number of suggestions covering pastoral guidance, prayer partners, mentor, and reorientation.

Doug began by using an illustration of his daughter's learning to drive. He admitted that he was "a little nervous" during this process. With the concept of spiritual direction we must be sure that God is in the driver's seat.



It is the hunger for God that drives us all. That hunger often calls for some silence and some slowing down which we do not do well. We need to stop and listen to what God is saying. Spiritual direction calls for the interior work that God is doing. **Doug** then took us through a brief exercise in silent meditation. We were instructed to sit silently and spend a few minutes and listen for God's presence. After the meditation we were asked to share what we had seen/felt/heard. Several people shared what they had heard in the silence. The point made was that in our busy lives we need to develop some periods of true silence where we can listen to God and get closer to God's plan for us. To further emphasize this need, an article was handed out with information regarding the ELCA website.

Spiritual direction is not a theological replacement but rather an aide in developing one's prayer life and tuning into a relationship with God through study and developing relationships.

Your Spiritual Director may be someone who is trained in the field or it could be someone in your home congregation. It could be your pastor or it could be a close friend who is willing to sit with you and shares your spiritual adventure. What does a spiritual director do? How does this play out in your fourth day walk? You want someone who is going to listen. You want someone to listen in a contemplative, reflective style, someone who will help you notice things that they are hearing in your words. A Spiritual Guide may point to certain practices but not with a problem solving, "fix it" mentality.

Bottom line, a spiritual director is one who will make a commitment to travel together in your spiritual journey. In conclusion: Spiritual directors may serve as a coach, but it takes personal discipline to follow through and learn to live the life in grace. Pastor Doug ended with, "Seek God in everything, and every one, every day of your life."

What's in a name?
Many have asked how I got my nick name, Nu. I went to college during the days of Mork and Mindy when my nickname was Nanu. About three years ago my nephew and godson had difficulty saying Auntie Nanu or Auntie Nanette, so he shortened it to Nu. I love being called Auntie Nu and now my friends prefer to call me Nu! GLYASDNU.

Saturday's Business Meeting

President **Larry Witham** called the meeting to order and asked **Chris Veres** from Good News VdC in Michigan to lead the opening prayer.

Larry announced, to much applause, that the National Coordinator Exploratory Committee had so many volunteers after yesterday's request, that the committee is now formed with 11 people representing 10 different states (NC, TX, IL, CA, TN, CO, FL, MD, OH, and MN).

The Finance & Budget Committee presented the 2008 Budget for approval which was approved by unanimous vote. They also recommended that the current NLS membership fee be reviewed for an increase and that the a new policy be put in place for NLSAM host committee treasurers to have all records available for review within 90 days after the close of the meeting.

The Hosting a NLS Annual Meeting Committee handed out their report and announced that Florida's eight Secretariats have given formal bids to host the 2009 NLSAM.

Long Range Planning Committee handed out a paper copy of their meeting and will be meeting again via phone conference in November.

Palanca and Banner Committee presented banners to the newest Secretariats: Northern Lights, Emerald Coast, and VdC of the Rockies.

The Spiritual Director's Committee discussed how to invite new Pastors to a weekend, the possibility of sharing Pastors regionally, the roles of non-ordained serving as Spiritual Directors.

Outgoing NLS Secretary **Jan Long** and out-going President **Larry Witham** were recognized for their service on the NLS Board and were presented with beautiful quilts, which Nu reminded them would fit perfectly on their beds at future VdC weekends.

The 2008 NLSAM Host Committee from Arizona gave a slideshow highlighting what the state offers, including beautiful sunsets and that the Grand Canyon University will have private bathrooms for each room. To get everyone in the spirit of 2 Timothy 1:6, "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (NIV), they presented a really fun puppet show which helped us to **Get on Fire for Jesus**.



The NLS banner was passed from this year's Chair **Lynn Ryan** to 2008 NLSAM Chairs **Joyce Dickerson** and **Rick Knopf**.



In conclusion, **Michelle Koniewicz**, Taste of Grace VdC in Illinois, led the closing prayer and after a motion to adjourn, the meeting was closed.

Reminders:

- Dorm Room Key: Return key, lanyard and envelope to registration desk or use the “Key Drop Box” in CBH. Write first and last name on manila envelope, dorm name and room number. If you do not return your key, lanyard and envelope (or you lose it), you’ll be charged \$50 by the University.
- Evaluation Forms: PLEASE fill out and return your Evaluation Forms. They assist the NLS board in their preparations for upcoming annual meetings. *We value your input. :)*
- Pastor C Betts Huntley’s correct phone is 727-531-2593



THANK YOU

FROM

INKY:



We would like to thank the hospitality committee for some of the special touches they added to the weekend. The cookies, candy, snacks, vegetables, and ice cream. What a joy it was to try some of the Latvian cheese made just for us.

The host committee prays that they have been able to provide for your major needs and wants, and hope that you saw the love for you and Christ in their eyes, words and action.

We would also like to thank you for your willingness to help us when the need arose.

We pray that you have been as blessed as we have been. May you carry Christ’s candle and be a light to others. God loves you and so do we. INKY

Saturday Night Banquet

At the Saturday Night Banquet, the INKY team outdid themselves once again. The hall was resplendent in its decorations consistent with the “Race Set Before Us” Theme. The dinner consisted of a carving station, Chicken Cordon Bleu, Fettuccine Alfredo, asparagus, and a sinfully delicious dessert buffet which Luther would have been proud of as attendees “sinned boldly”. The invocation was delivered by Pastor **Doug Givan**, INKY’s Spiritual Director.



Following dinner, **Jim Ryan** (INKY VdC Treasurer) asked all present to join him in toasting the years of service given by the outgoing NLS President **Larry Witham** and the outgoing Secretary **Jan Long**. Their service to the community and Christ has blessed us all. Jim’s second toast was to the incoming President **Tracy Schmidlin**, Secretary **Katie Sistar**, and returning VP Outreach **Dave Erdman** for their willingness to serve. Finally, **Jim** asked the entire host committee to stand and be recognized for their tireless service to this weekend’s NLSAM.

As **Jim** proclaimed “DeColores” to the room, music began to fill the air as members of INKY’s community entered the room singing “DeColores”. As they circled the banquet hall the attendees watched in awe. They were treated to a special serenade which many will never forget.





Don’t forget to visit the NLS website:
viadecristo.org

CONEXIONES

Vol. 15.4 Sunday July 29, 2007

CONEXIONES is the official publication of the National Lutheran Secretariat, a national association of the Via de Cristo (Way of Christ) movement, representing over 89,000 who have participated in 46 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 29, 2007

| Time | Event | Building | Location |
|------------|-------------------------|----------|------------------|
| 7:30 a.m. | Breakfast | SSC | Dining Hall |
| 8:30 a.m. | Worship | SSC | Chapel 2nd Floor |
| 10:00 a.m. | Board Meeting | SSC | Chapel 2nd Floor |
| 11:00 | CHECK OUT BY 11:00 a.m. | CBH | Lobby |

NEW MOVEMENTS

The meeting actually started before the meeting started. If that sounds confusing it simply means that people came in and started discussing the work to be done long before the meeting actually started.

Once we started, **Dave Erdman** shared with us that the way to start a weekend was to be sure you had a strong, committed core community. The exciting part was that we immediately began starting a new community in the Shenandoah Valley and discussing work in the west.

Questions raised: Will the existing secretariat near by support your work? Are there enough people in the area who are potential members and workers?

The prime suggestion was to start a secretariat board and get a leadership group in existence. Much discussion followed about where to find people to develop the group. Once the core leadership is organized, you should begin recruiting. The next step would be to get the home secretariat to agree to sponsor this new development with prayer and money for at least three years.

One word of warning, be firm in keeping the basics the basics and maintain the traditions in keeping with your home secretariat.

A lot of good suggestions were made, too many to record at this time. Discussion was energetic and if everything discussed comes to fruition, we may be looking at the birth pangs of three or more new secretariats. Over and over the word kept coming up, get a core leadership formed. Draw on nearby secretariats to help locate and organize strong lay leadership.

Dave shared the process of starting the VdC in Latvia. They flew 14 Latvians to this country to make a weekend, then later brought several to this country to work on teams. Workers from INKY flew over to Latvia to help on their first and second weekends, by the third weekend they were actually doing the work on their own. Obviously this took a lot of energy and money, but once the commitment was there the result of assured.

Saturday's Theme:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus,**

Sunday's Theme:

the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1 & 2 (the New King James version)

May this weekend have served to strengthen, enlighten and inspire you to: *"Run the race with Perseverance.....fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."* May our Lord bless you and keep you until we meet again.

THANK YOU INKY!

Thank you for driving home the idea of focusing on The Race Set Before Us. We had a great cloud of witnesses looking to Jesus to help us run with endurance in this race. Thank you to each member of the pit crew for your kind hospitality and graciousness. Your diligence and perseverance in organizing this annual meeting showed us how to run the race when we return to our communities. A special thank you to **Linda Erdman, Mike Clifton, Melanie Doyon, Dawn Dutton and John Patterson** who wrote the articles and took pictures to produce the daily Conexiones.

ARIZONA

NATIONAL VIA de CRISTO ANNUAL MEETING

JULY 24 - 27, 2008

Whether you choose to tour the Grand Canyon or find yourself "standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona", there's plenty to do before or after your attendance at the 2008 NLS Meeting in Phoenix, AZ.

Joyce Dickerson, who is co-chairing the 2008 event along with **Rick Knopf**, said that they have been planning for the upcoming meeting for approximately 18 months. The team was called and in place prior to the 2006 meeting in California. Many of them attended the 2006 NLS Meeting and 14 of the 4th Dayers from Arizona are here in Indianapolis.

"Our secretariat is very excited about next year," she said. Once the decision was made, key people were called. When asked how the site, Grand Canyon University, was selected, **Dickerson** replied, "It was a process of elimination." It's a small university, not too spread out, which will be conducive to fellowship, hospitality, and moving about. There are great facilities such as an exercise center and a computer lab which will be available to all participants. The dorms are set up in suites, so there are restrooms right off each room.

In sharing about the very well received puppet show given earlier, she said that her team had met for 8 weeks, 2 hours each week to learn the art of puppetry. "It brought the team so close!" Much of the team meetings so far had focused on team building and fellowship.



We all can look forward to "fanning the flames of the gifts of God which are in each of us" as we look forward to the enthusiasm and hospitality that is sure to come in Arizona next year.