

National Lutheran Secretariat

Annual Gathering

Hosting Considerations

This is an abbreviated version of the National Lutheran Secretariat's Hosting Guidelines document which is given to a community when they will be hosting an annual gathering.

Last Edited June 2017

Terms and abbreviations used in this document:

HC	Host Committee or Host Community
HS	Host Secretariat
NB	National Board
NLS	National Lutheran Secretariat
NLSAG	NLS Annual Gathering
NLSEC	NLS Executive Committee
NLSVPA	NLS Vice President of Administration

*Proverbs 1:20 ff - Wisdom cries aloud in the street... she raises her voice ...”
How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?*

Wisdom is different from intelligence. Intelligence seeks knowledge and seeks to eliminate ambiguity. Wisdom on the other hand, resists automatic thinking, seeks to understand ambiguity better, to grasp the deeper meaning of what is known and to understand the limits of knowledge.

Robert J. Sternberg, PhD.

Preface

Please read the above quotation and hear it as a plea from the Via de Cristo community for you to approach the National Lutheran Secretariat’s Annual Gathering with wisdom rather than simple intelligence. The document you hold contains a great deal of intelligence accumulated through the many years our communities have gathered. However, you may stifle the Holy Spirit, if you read it simply as an instruction manual. Our hope is that you begin now praying for wisdom; and never cease from that prayer until all final reports have been filed following your year of hosting.

The strength of the Cursillo® method is our dependence on the Holy Spirit and our commitment to prayer. Our 3-day events are not the performance of a well written play but a creation by the Holy Spirit allowing an encounter with the Living Word. As “Wisdom calls in the street (Prov. 1:20)” so Wisdom beckons to you now. Our intent is to provide you with enough information that you might go to the Lord in prayer; with enough insight to ask for vision. . We want each person called to the host team to be willing to use their gifts under the direction of God. We pray all team members blend their personal gifts in humility and service for the benefit of all.

Hosting Is Honorable Serving

From the beginning, the National Lutheran Secretariat (NLS) met in order to share common fundamentals and to be a resource to the movement we now know as Via de Cristo. It met regularly to develop materials that carried a Lutheran perspective on a 4th Day movement similar to other 4th day movements that are impacting people and churches around the world. In more recent years, the NLSAG has served as a training / sharing ground where the essentials of the movement are encouraged. Ideas are shared and discussed, still with intention to be a resource to its communities.

Historically the opportunity to serve as host to this gathering was perceived as an honor. In the very beginning the host community would house delegates in the homes of local Cursillista. Even though it was a lot of work, the hosts considered it an honor, much like putting on a weekend – serving Christ and those He loves. The focus was on Jesus Christ and all sacrifice was gladly made.

However, as the movement grew, it became more practical to keep everyone together on a common “campus”. Rather than have participants spreading out to local homes in the evening, people were able to stay close, enjoy fellowship, and/or meet later into the night. Morning activities could begin earlier with stronger attendance. Some intimate times with the local communities were lost, but much was gained by continuing to use campus settings.

Over time, attendance grew to an average of 200. This meant that hosting, while still an honor would be more of a challenge. The challenge would be logistical, financial and spiritual. Along with a larger venue comes the need for more focused event planning and many questions. The NLSEB knows many of the questions already and has created this document to help answer those questions. Knowing full well that each venue is different, this document is meant to serve as a template or framework so each Secretariat does not have to start from scratch.

Hosting today requires communities to be creative about fund raising, grant writing, event promotion, transportation and working with teams of people to make it all happen with the bottom line still that of service to our Lord; service that reflects our abiding love for one another.

While continued, growth is desirable, event planning can become event oriented and the danger becomes a loss of focus on why we do what we do. The danger can be expressed - “we” are doing this for “them” - and community becomes distracted, if not divided. The amount of money involved is sizable and questions often arise, is this “our” money or “their” money? When the gathering is over, do we ship the money “we” worked for to “them” or do we “get to keep it for our community?” It is a perfectly natural, human question. The answer to the question should be equally natural and spiritual. “Our money” is, in fact, Christ’s money. Christ has enabled us to raise it for this ministry.

All of our secretariats, as they are able, support the movement in one way or another. When sponsoring a national gathering “we” is actually defined as all of us in the Via de Cristo. Individuals must guard against a parochial attitude that shrinks “we” to single Secretariat. Fund raising at this level is done with the intention of the national body benefitting; the national gathering, as being the recipient. However, the NLS understanding the effort and struggle imposed on a Hosting Secretariat, determined that once all true expenses are paid, the excess is to be divided between the Host Community and the NLS. It is not the Host Community’s responsibility to forward any money to anyone other than the NLSEC when the event has completed.

It becomes the NLSEC’s responsibility, on behalf of all affiliated Secretariats, to determine how best to invest those funds in Christ’s mission. There are other expenses that the NLSEC incurs, which the host committee never sees. I.e.: there are Secretariats unable to attend due to lack of funds for one reason or another that would be able to attend through “scholarships”. There have been occasions when a host committee has needed supplemental funds from the NLS. While we never want a Hosting Committee to lose money, we also do not want to encourage them to be so focused on the dollars that they miss out on the blessings of community building that hosting makes possible.

There are indeed many temptations that the evil one can use to lure us away from Christ’s mission set forth in this gathering. Our mission, together, is to make possible the National Gathering! We wish to encourage everyone around the nation to stay the course, to honor the gift of the Via de Cristo, and to make a positive impact with Christ’s love to any environment where we are gathering.

Let us remember to rejoice in the honor we are given to serve.

Introduction

“The purpose of the NLS is to foster and encourage renewal in the Christian faith in the Lutheran Church and in the larger world community by presenting the fullness of Christ’s ministry by both the laity and clergy. The NLS aims at bringing Christians to a fuller personal knowledge of and a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and a deeper level of commitment to Him and to spreading His word.”¹

The NLS shall be the means by which many Via de Cristo communities may be represented on Via de Cristo matters of national interest and the means by which the NLS can effectively communicate with other structures within the Lutheran Church and other organized bodies.

The purpose of the National Lutheran Secretariat Annual Gathering (NLSAG):

1. It is a gathering of delegates from member secretariats to conduct the necessary business of the NLS.
2. It is to learn and share. This may be accomplished through forums, workshops, seminars, small groups and/or guest speakers, discussing how other secretariats are successfully carrying out the Via de Cristo Mission.
3. It is to hold true to and teach the rudiments of our movement, the fundamentals of Via de Cristo, and visions for the future as we change and grow, while maintaining continuity with the gift that has been given to us.
4. It assists the hosting secretariat in furthering their movement by building relationships and developing leadership in a non-monetary way.

In order for the NLSAG to be a success, many people need to be involved, each with their own tasks to complete, constantly and consistently with an attitude of servanthood. It is a mutual effort of two groups:

1. **The NLS Executive Committee (NLSEC)** with the NLS Vice President of Administration (NLSVPA) as the liaison.
 - a. NLSEC consists of: Executive Director, President, Spiritual Director, VP of Administration, VP of Outreach, Secretary and Treasurer
2. **The Host Committee (HC)** from the Hosting Secretariat(s) with HC Chairperson(s) as the liaison(s).
 - a. HC consists of teams of people: Chairperson(s) and Assistant(s), Spiritual Director(s), Treasurer, Secretary, Communications, Facilities, Food, Fund Raising, Hospitality, Housing, Music, Palanca, Public Relations, Registration, Technology and Transportation.

If the two groups, open to the Holy Spirit, do their homework well, and communicate well, they will be "Partners in Success", conducting a successful NLSAG and building a stronger local community.

¹ Excerpt from the Constitution and By-laws of the National Lutheran Secretariat Preamble

The Hosting Process Explained

Who Can Host an NLSAG? Any Secretariat with the desire, support, location and servant heart.

What's next if we are thinking about hosting?

- Pray for discernment and read this document!
- Begin the discussion with your Secretariat.
- A solicitation will take place each year to recruit future Secretariats to host an annual gathering.
 - ❖ The NLSVPA will try to have gatherings scheduled at least 2-3 years from now.
 - ❖ Ideally, each Region will be willing to host or co-host once every 7 years and the gathering will move around the country equally.
- Interested communities need to let the NLS VPA know that they are interested.
 - ❖ The NLSVPA will send the current version of the Full Hosting Guidelines and any related documents for your Secretariat to read thoroughly. As needed for discernment ask questions of the NLSVPA.
- Persons of the interested hosting community(ies) need to get formal approval from their local Secretariat. How?
 - ❖ The Secretariat(s) should have a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status with identification number.
 - ❖ When multiple communities are hosting the NLSAG together, decide which Secretariat's 501(c)(3) tax exempt identification number will be used. The Secretariat whose tax-exempt identification number is being used shall, for purposes of this document, be referred to as the HS.
 - ❖ The Lay Director of the HS creates a letter of intent to the NLSVPA who confirms the offer.
 - ❖ The Secretariat will need to designate an HC chair/co-chair to be the liaison with NLSEB.
 - ❖ Once you have made the decision, commit to it! Pray without ceasing!!
- Re-read the large document, pull it apart and use it for team meetings. The whole team does not need the whole document before you get started. Just a few need to be very familiar with the document.

What are the Key Responsibilities of Hosting Community(ies)

- Pray and prepare yourselves, and your community, to invite and to serve 200 attendees to your location!
- Recruit willing and able local host community leaders and volunteers to be a part of the Mid-Year process as well as the NLSAG that you will host.
- Locate and secure a facility that can house, feed and provide meeting space for the NLSAG
- Send a delegation to the NLSAG prior to the one you will be hosting to shadow counter parts.
- Provide logistical support during the mid-year and the NLSAG – transportation, meals, etc.
- Appoint a treasurer to handle funds in a fiscally responsible way. Open a new account and do not co-mingle funds for any reason. Know who covers what, because the NLSEC will pay for some expenses along the way. (from mid-year to the gathering)
- Promotional people and fund raising people need to be in place early. Read the section on Funding.

What about the Location or Site Selection?

- Pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the site of HIS choosing
- Timing? The NLSAG begins on the fourth (4th) Thursday in July each year. The Mid-Year meeting is held approximately 8 to 9 months before the NLSAG in October or November.
 - ❖ Board Members may arrive early due to travel and meeting times. Is this an issue?
- Does the location have limitations to our needs?
 - ❖ Full dining service in the summer?
 - ❖ Will the site allow golf carts?
 - ❖ Is it handicap accessible?
- Accommodation Needs are based on 200 at this time. (See the larger document for more details)
 - ❖ Business Meeting or Common area
 - Seating for 200 with at least 95 seats designated for delegates
 - Tables and chairs are optimal but theater seating works
 - This room may double for other purposes.
 - ❖ Worship space needs seating for 225 – 250
 - Local community and visitors are encouraged to attend as well
 - Space to serve communion, have a music team
 - ❖ Dining space requires approx. 200- 225
 - You may include team in your numbers if they will eat on site
 - It is possible to stagger times slightly in smaller venues.
 - ❖ Housing space – for all attendees first
 - Be conscious of handicap and disabled participants. How many, where will they go, etc.
 - Approximately 90 double rooms and 50 single rooms
 - ❖ Rooms or spaces for committees, dialogues and region to region meetings
 - Approximately 7 – 10 rooms that will hold between 15-35 people
 - Some of these may be interchangeable. See current year for examples.
 - ❖ Offices for Communications and the daily Newsletter
 - Ideal to have one room for each in close proximity for them to share the following
 - Access to a printer or high speed WiFi copier
 - Computers (laptops)
 - Tables for sorting
 - ❖ Registration space for check in and check out
 - ❖ Hospitality space where snacks and drinks can be made available for attendees throughout the day
 - ❖ Vendor Space
 - The Distribution Center and Symbols Inc attend every year
 - Other vendors may include your community, Thrivent or other benefactors for NLSAG
 - The space will need tables for the vendors
 - ❖ Space for Forums with small group discussions at round tables (approx. 20-24 large round tables)
 - ❖ Space for a small Palanca Chapel
 - ❖ Space for poster signing with tables

What are the teams that make up a Host Committee? (See the larger document for more details)

- Chairperson
 - In advance, throughout the NLSAG and the wrap up – the “go to” person
- Co-Chair(s)
 - In advance, throughout and the wrap up to complement the Chairperson’s abilities
- Treasurer
 - One or two In advance, throughout and to wrap up finances when it is completed
 - Who will set up a separate account for the gathering and have 2 signers on the account
- Secretary / Records keeper
 - To take minutes from beginning to end of all meetings
- Spiritual Director(s) (SD)
 - One lead SD in advance and throughout to work with the NLS SD and an SD Host team
 - Plus 5-9 SD’s to preside over worship and share messages/meditations for 7 services
- Worship Team
 - One lead in advance and throughout
 - Plus a few people to assist with creating worship services, working with the SD
 - 6-8 people on site to be worship assistants (readers, ushers, communion assistants)
 - Other attendees may serve as worship assistants if needed
- Registration
 - One lead in advance and throughout that is comfortable with excel documents and email
 - In advance and throughout to collect and distribute information from registrations
 - 4-8 in shifts during actual registration check in and check out
- Housing
 - One lead in advance and throughout to work with site facility on housing the attendees
 - Plus 6-8 on check-in day to help with luggage and directions to accommodations
 - 2-4 others to handle any issues that arise and check out procedures
- Dining Room Team
 - One /two leads in advance and throughout to be a liaison to the facility
 - Plus 4-6 to assist with greeting attendees and serve in the dining room
- Facilities Team
 - One lead in advance and throughout to work out the logistics of each room’s set up
 - Plus 2-3 assistants for physical arranging that may need done
 - Works with the site facility maintenance people
- Office / Newsletter
 - One lead in advance and throughout to organize the office for the NLSAG
 - Plus 4-6 reporters for the NLS Newsletter Editor to assign tasks
 - Plus 2 photographers for the Newsletter Editor
 - Plus 2-4 misc utility workers in the office
- Technology Team
 - One lead in advance and throughout to oversee AV and computer needs; assisting with sound and power point presentations for worship, speakers, business meetings, etc.
 - Plus 2-3 to work with the facility technical people
- Hospitality Team
 - One / two lead people in advance and throughout to gather refreshments as needed
 - Plus 4-6 extras to help with luggage at registration
 - Plus 3-4 more to serve refreshments in shifts throughout the day
 - Plus 3-4 more to serve as guides between scheduled activities
 - Plus 2 in the mornings to serve coffee for early risers

- Music Team
 - One lead in advance and throughout to provide music for worship and transition times as needed
 - Work with the SD and Worship leads to choose music
 - Plus 4 or more musicians at each worship service. They do not have to be the same 4 people throughout the weekend
- Palanca Team
 - One lead in advance and throughout to be the prayer warriors for the team and the gathering
 - Plus 6-8 to set up a chapel and staff it for the weekend
 - Plus 1 or 2 (optional) to set up and be available in the poster signing room
- Public Relations Team
 - One or two lead who understand marketing and promoting large events.
 - Plus 1-2 to assist promoting the gathering and special events in the local community
 - Work with the fund raising team
 - Letting the NLS President or Executive Director when a special guest
- Fund Raising Team
 - One or two lead in advance and throughout creatively plan and man events/activities
 - 10-12 people to assist with activities
 - Get the events to the PR team ASAP for promotion
- Transportation
 - One lead in advance and throughout to organize a team for transporting attendees
 - Plus 6 - 12 drivers to serve in shifts for airport arrivals and departures
 - Plus 6-12 drivers to serve as on-site transporters for attendees between activities, typically using golf carts. These groups may overlap

The Host Committee will consist of approximately 15 – 20 people who will be the team leaders to create the individual teams listed above. A minimum amount of local people to run a gathering would be approximately 25-30 in advance and 25 to 30 more people during the gathering. Attendees and those who are on site to “shadow” for next year’s gathering can also help out in many areas of need. Comfortable numbers would be 35-40 in advance and 35-45 more people added to the four day time frame.

Some teams may be combined and certainly a single team member can fill more than one non-chair position on site. For example; an airport driver on Wednesday may serve as a reporter on Thursday, help out with Hospitality on Friday and back to the airport on Saturday. Just make sure the team leaders know how and when people are available to assist when someone is willing to work in different areas.

Creating teams for the gathering is like creating teams for weekends. First we pray for guidance. Then we come together to build relationships that will forge a stronger community, working for a common goal. Please know that this too is God’s weekend and if we honor God with our sincere efforts, He will be there every step of the way.