

2024 Annual Report of the President of the NLS

De Colores Cristoistas,

This past year has been a great experience and I will be happy to be back together with all of you for this year's annual gathering. While it certainly has been a learning curve, I feel proud of what we have accomplished and I look forward to the upcoming year. I appreciate the support and encouragement from all of the Board Members, Appointed Members and Lay Directors from around the community as I have gotten my feet wet during this first year. It has been an exciting ride.

Over the past 12 months, the NLS board has been busy making things happen. One of the more exciting accomplishments is the addition of a new appointed position to the NLS Board, a Palanca Coordinator, which Kim Brownlow has agreed to take on. Kim will be presenting an EOI at this year's gathering to gather ideas and/or concerns from the rest of the community as she restarts and reshapes this important position. One of her first projects is to establish a more efficient manner in which we can all share palanca. Watch for more to come.

In addition, we continue to work to improve communication and be even more transparent in our ongoing NLS Board activities. To that end, the Lay Director Roundtable meetings, started by past NLS president John Aclin, continue to be well attended and well received by the lay directors from around the community. These meetings incur a lot of good discussions and have engendered good ideas, which we are pursuing. The Spiritual Directors' roundtables started by Pastor Karl persist as well, with similar reception. In addition, we have also continued the Aclin Era procedure of the Monthly NLS Updates sent out to the mailing list in an attempt to keep everyone abreast of what is happening at the National level. If you are not receiving these updates, please reach out to Randy and Marcia Poisel, database coordinators, to ensure that you are on the mailing list. Randy and Marcia can be reached at databasecoordinator@viadecristo.org.

I would like to thank Amanda Hunter, NLS Communications Chair, for taking on more responsibilities and attending monthly NLS Board meetings to ensure continuity and timeliness of the NLS Updates. In addition to the NLS Monthly Update, Amanda, along with Brian Schwartz, Executive Director, has been working with Eric Needle, webmaster, to keep the website fresh. We continue to look for ways to improve the functionality of our website. One such update is the posting of the new Rollo Outlines which are now available on the website.

I would also like to thank Brian and Robin Schwartz who have also stepped up to assist with the VdC Store. They have been working diligently to update the inventory list and fulfill orders. Please visit their booth at the gathering to purchase Pilgrim Guides or just say "Hi".

Our appointed chairs and regional coordinators continue to work hard in their respective offices. Without them none of this works. They are the feet and legs of the movement. The face out in the world and I appreciate each and every one of them for their support and commitment to the mission of Via de Cristo.

Sadly, during this year's Gathering we will be saying goodbye to two very important members of the NLS Board. Jane Winge (VPA) and Steve Barnett (treasurer). Jane's successful leadership of the past four annual gatherings and her attention to detail on the NLS Board has been the rudder that has steered this ship over the past several years. We will miss her quiet, steady leadership. Through

Steve's financial management we were able to move some money into Thrivent CDs, allowing these funds to earn interest, which helps keep this ship afloat (keeping with the marine metaphor). Both Steve and Jane will be stepping down this year to take on other responsibilities in their faith communities. They have been solid members of the NLS team, and their absences will definitely be felt. I thank them for their support and commitment to this movement.

Finally, I would like to share another exciting opportunity. For those of you attending the 2024 Gathering, we will be introducing a proposal for the institution of a new Scholarship program. This scholarship will be specifically tailored to seminarians from around the country to support young seminarians while at the same time promoting Via de Cristo. The goal will be to create a deeper relationship with spiritual directors and church pastors to hopefully encourage more participation the Via de Cristo movement in general. For more information, speak to your delegates upon their return. Watch for additional updates in our monthly newsletters.

It has been my pleasure to serve this movement over this past year and I look forward to what the next year will bring.

God Loves You and So Do I,

In His Service,

Brian Comeno

President of the National Lutheran Secretariat