

Annual Report of the NLS Executive Director

God's peace and blessings be with you all. Last year at this time was difficult time for me at work, and I wasn't even sure I could come to the annual gathering in North Carolina last year. God had other ideas 😊. Work slowed down significantly so I could come to the gathering, and the love, grace and blessings I felt from you lifted me up in ways I cannot thank you for. It also opened up a new avenue of spreading Christ to others through Sings the Rooster Christian Gifts. Steve and Joan Klotz have been a staple in Via de Cristo and at the annual gathering for years as owners of Sings the Rooster, selling Christian gifts and De Colores themed items. It was in North Carolina at last year's gathering that they approached me about potentially purchasing the business. After prayerful consideration, I felt that was the path God was calling me down and I bought it. I went from potentially not being able to be in North Carolina to leaving with a new business I had not even thought about. As I reflect on the last 12 months, Jeremiah 29 consistently is placed on my heart, "For I know the plans I have for you...to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

The reason I share this story with you is wherever you think your life is going, Christ is there with you...loving you and leading you. That is what I have seen in our Via de Cristo ministry this year. Your board is mission focused and dedicated to the discernment of God's direction. There has been more engagement with the Regions and Secretariats this year than in much of the time I have been in the role. Whether it be trying to save secretariats in peril or start new ones, the Board prayerfully listens and obediently works to His end.

Our financial position continues to improve and allows us to try new ideas. We have prayerfully considered and undertaken grant writing again. This time we have enlisted some professional help to give better probability for success...investing our "talents" to help struggling secretariats and the Via de Cristo body as a whole.

Our overall technology infrastructure is in a better place with Karen Weires efforts over the past 12 months. She has implemented a cohesive strategy across all platforms and is making things easier for Secretariats and the Board. We are thankful for the Lord leading her to her current position when her term was over as VP of Outreach last year.

Two people can prayerfully discern and come up on opposite sides of an issue. We have had some passionate discussions as we try to discern God's will for the ministry. However, no matter what the question or action is on the table, the Board is willing to go solicit feedback from the secretariats. The Lay Leader and Spiritual Director calls are examples of the desire for feedback, as well as special topics that we feel will significantly impact the body. The Board has a deep love for Via de Cristo as do all of you, and they will go to great lengths to discern where God is calling us to go.

Please continue to pray for the ministry and our Board members...and don't stop letting your voice be heard. God is always good, and He has blessed us this past year. I look forward to seeing what God has in store for us in the coming year.

In His service,

Brian Schwarz

Executive Director