

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/5/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 6 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for all who are struggling because of the heavy rains. Pray for those who have no shelter. Pray for those who are in difficulty because of the impact of the excessive rainfall. Ask that GOD offer protection and support for all.*

This past weekend I was absent from St. Andrew because I was serving as a spiritual director on a Lutheran Cursillo weekend. Cursillo is a retreat program with the goal of developing leaders for congregations. Similar programs include Episcopal or Catholic Cursillo, Via de Cristo (different denominations), Walk to Emmaus, and others. Since I first attended Cursillo as a pilgrim in 1998, I have served as a spiritual director on twenty-five weekends. This weekend was a men's weekend, and it will be followed by a women's weekend this week. (I am not serving on the women's weekend.)

Cursillo is Spanish for "short course." Lutheran Cursillo, then, is a short course in Christianity that presents Lutheran theology and discipleship in such a way as to inspire pilgrims to a higher level of commitment to CHRIST and greater service in the congregation and community. A weekend consists of fifteen talks (ten given by laypeople and five by clergy), five meditations, great food, adequate sleep, and some surprises. They're also a lot of fun. Often those who attend a weekend come away with a profoundly deeper sense of GOD's love. This, in turn, moves them to use the tools learned on the weekend to continue their growth in faith and to respond to GOD's love through expanded service and witness. Since I first attended, I have felt that Cursillo is the best program that exists today for developing Christian disciples and leaders.

As I said, I have served now on twenty-five weekends. I try to serve on one a year. Some years I am asked to serve more frequently, but because I take a weekend of vacation to work on a retreat and because it means a weekend away from the church I am serving, I limit myself to one a year. Still, because I have seen the impact of this program on the mission and ministry of congregations, I continue this once-a-year commitment.

St. Andrew has several members who have attended Cursillo or Via de Cristo weekends as pilgrims. Cursillo is set up as pairs of weekends, one for men followed by one for women. It is held either in Montebello or Pomona, so it is relatively close to attend. Via de Cristo has the attraction of being coed so couples can attend together. However, these retreats happen either in Frazier Park or in the mountains above Bakersfield, so it is a significantly greater distance to go. On a weekend, sponsors take the pilgrim to the retreat site on Thursday evening and then pick them up at the end of the weekend on Sunday late afternoon.

If you think you might be interested in going to a Cursillo weekend, let me know. I'll be glad to answer your questions and connect you to sponsors from our congregation or take you myself.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey