

## The Way of Christ

Via de Cristo (Spanish for the Way of Christ) is divided into two weekends in February with the men attending on the first weekend the women on the following weekend. Some, both men and women, attend for the first time, others go back to help serve and put the weekend together. But whether by attending for the first time or returning to serve, everyone has the opportunity to get closer to our Lord, have a deeper understanding of the richness of their faith, and experience Christian fellowship in a peaceful, prayerful, joyful setting free from everyday cares and worries.

Although Via de Cristo weekends are open to all denominations, it's the Lutheran Secretariat of South Dakota that is the sponsoring agency for the weekends addressed here. Via de Cristo is not a club or society. There is no membership or secret handshake. It is not something you join. It is an opportunity to experience the love of God and the shared joy of being a Christian with others who are seeking to renew or deepen their faith and take a closer walk with God.

The people, who attend, for the first time sit in a fellowship hall at tables comprised of five or six people including a couple of people who have previously attended a weekend. People stay with the same table all weekend and get to know each other pretty well. A series of half-hour talks are given by both lay people and ordained ministers in which they share themselves, their families, their faith and some thoughts about the nature of God and His plans for His people. Then the folks at the tables discuss what they have heard and share their feelings and thoughts with the entire group at the end of the day. I know that sounds kind of boring, but the discussions are often fun, lively, and rich with humor and deep meaning at the same time. There are morning, daytime and evening worship services. And there is daily communion with a Pastor presiding. There are messages and sermons that are often interactive worship services along with lots of singing of great old hymns and some new music too. And there is prayer. Beyond that there are three excellent meals every day in a beautiful dining hall, all the snacks you would care to eat, and some special music, presentations, fun, fellowship at a whole new level, and prayer time.

That's the outside stuff. The inside stuff is simply this – in that natural setting just slightly removed from the day to day world, time becomes less important and God's word become more important. And people hear God's word, and talk about God's word, and think and pray about God's word without all of the world's distractions, and in the beauty, loving fellowship, and quiet they can be still and experience a new closeness with God, feel his awesome love for us all, and begin to truly understand the magnitude of God's sacrifice and the grace and salvation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's the weekend of a lifetime, ask someone who's been there.

Patrick Garoutte