



REV. JUDITH L. WATT – Interview on Chicagoland Cursillo

Dave and I live in Chicago and worship at Fourth Presbyterian Church, where I serve as an Associate Pastor.

Al Timm had a good friend (Joel Bakker) from Edmond, Oklahoma, who was a pastor there, and Alice Rubash, Verna Todd, Arlene and Fred Foster, Al, and I went out there to learn about Cursillo. Fred was very enthusiastic about it, perhaps because he had had a similar experience with “Tres Dias.” We flew to Oklahoma, were met there, and were driven to Hinton, Oklahoma, to a very nice camp, in a canyon, among red rocks etc. That’s where we had our first Cursillo experience. We had no idea what we had signed on for, so every step took us in a surprising new direction.

We became good friends with these Oklahoma folks, who were very helpful and supportive of us as we started our first Chicagoland Presbyterian Cursillo. Half of our first staff came from them.

So much is learned about Cursillo when you return as a staff member. That’s when it all seems to make sense. I went back a number of times and enjoyed being a Spiritual Advisor every time I went. Dave Handley returned as well in the same capacity. I never realized when I first went that there was a designated facilitator at our table. All but one of us in our initial group enjoyed the experience.

I remember being awakened for the “Robes of Righteousness” and given a robe. As we went down the hall to the dining room, all were dancing. As I looked at our group leaders, I was surprised to “see” my parents’ faces in them. I don’t think about heaven that much, but I truly felt it that morning! I had gotten a glimpse of heaven, and their joy-filled faces were up there.

I liked the weekend. The rollos and then the table discussion about them were meaningful. I liked the pace of it, the joy of it. I liked the laughter and the abundance of “Aha!” moments. I could see, however, that the weekend was hard on introverts. After attending a number of times, I became tired of the movie shown.

Eventually Norm Rubash came, and between the two Rubashes, they made things happen! They were the glue—knew how to make a ministry go. Alice recruited and brought so many participants. I saw people be changed. It was an intense three days, but offered the opportunity for Christian growth.

I could see as well that all of us do not talk about faith in the same way, for we use differing vocabularies. Yet it was an opportunity to see Christ at work, and for many of us it was an opportunity to grow in our faith and in talking about our faith. And, perhaps above all, to experience the joy of Christian community.