

## Origins of Vida Nueva

Vida Nueva's history begins with TEC – Teen's Encounter Christ.

Origin of TEC from the book: TEEN ENCOUNTER CHRIST, BY ANDRE' CIRINO O.F.M. & FRANCINE ROGERS, COPYWRITE 1978, ALBA HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS, CANFIELD, OHIO 44406.

'TEC-the word and the exercise-had its origin in the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan. The doors of TEC Lodge, 65 Emmett Street, Battle Creek, Michigan, first opened on October 9, 1965. The TEC movement, as we now know it, is an outgrowth of the Pastoral Institute of Loyola University in Chicago. It was developed and structured by Father Matthew Fedewa and Sister Concetta, R.S.M. The exercise is now conducted on a regular basis in several dioceses in the U.S. The TEC Manual and TEC materials have become the basis of modified, occasional exercises in many other places.'

Note: RESIDENTS ENCOUNTER CHRIST (REC), HANDICAPPED ENCOUNTER CHRIST (HEC) and VIDA NUEVA (VN) used TEC as a model for their retreats.

Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva modified the TEC retreat so it would follow the Protestant traditions. The first Vida Nueva was held in 1976 at Our Lady of Hope (the Oblate House) in Newburgh, New York.

Since its origin, VN Council (the ruling body of the organization) of the Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva has changed and modified this retreat to meet the needs of the youth. The early weekends started on Friday evening and ended on Monday afternoon and with the age 17 (Senior in High School) to 23 years old (The same guidelines that TEC used). Presently the weekends start on a Friday night and End Sunday evening and the age is Ninth Grade through 20 years old. The VN retreats have been held at many different locations in the Hudson Valley, New York area.

Vida Nueva means New Life (in Spanish) and is an experience with JESUS CHRIST and this has not changed since the original weekend. The Vida Nueva weekend contains a series of talks given by a volunteer team of clergy, youth and adults. The talks follow the basic themes of Christianity in its day-to-day application, and are followed by table discussions. Worship during the weekend is in the Protestant tradition.

Mid-Hudson worked with the Chaplains at the West Point Military Academy. Members from both West Point and Mid-Hudson communities severed together on team during the late '70's through the '80's to provide for over 20 West Point VN weekends which were held for both Young Men and Women West Point Cadets. The weekends were held off campus for the Cadets and this was the beginning of the Friday night - Sunday evening weekend format.

Mid-Hudson VN has helped other communities to set up and run their own Vida Nueva Weekends and has allowed those communities to use the name of Vida Nueva. Some of these communities have helped additional Vida Nueva communities to get started. Continual growth in this manner has advanced Vida Nueva to a world-wide organization.

## **Addition of Other Vida Nueva Communities**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, word of Vida Nueva had spread across the country as well as overseas. The VN Council had been approached by several people who wanted to have Vida Nueva weekends where they lived. While it was not feasible for the VN Council to hold a weekend in different parts of the United States, or the world for that matter, the VN Council graciously agreed to give their weekend outline, description of talks, and other material to help other communities get started. Some of the communities fizzled out before they even began. Others wanted to drastically change the weekend outline and dynamics. To these communities, the VN Council said that they may change what they wanted, but if it does not meet the standard weekend outline of Vida Nueva, they can't use the Vida Nueva name. The North Georgia community was one of those who reached out for help.

Like many others through the years, the originators of the North Georgia community wanted to change the standard Vida Nueva model. The VN Council reiterated that they are open to change anything they would like, but if it does not meet the standard weekend outline of Vida Nueva, they can't use the name. After several iterations and many discussions, the North Georgia model, although getting closer and closer, was still not close enough to the original weekend model. However, after prayerful consideration, the VN Council agreed to let the North Georgia community hold its first weekends under supervision of VN Council members. The result of the weekend was that the VN Council members present had given feedback to the entirety of the VN Council. The VN Council then granted permission to North Georgia to use the Vida Nueva name using their model so long as they stayed true to it and didn't change it.

In the following years, other communities began sprouting up in the southern United States all getting help in their inception from the North Georgia community. Throughout the years, the North Georgia community continued to seek guidance, direction, and approval from the original VN Council.

Vida Nueva was growing quickly and many communities had advanced from crawling, to walking, and even to running. That is, they were blessed and becoming well established communities. However, it came to light that some of the communities were wanting to change the weekend outline from what was given to them. Things were beginning to get out of hand and it was God's timing that the first Vida Nueva All Community meeting was held in August 2002. During this time with representative of all Vida Nueva communities present, we discussed, among other things, the need to get back to the original weekend outline and model. We all agreed on the Essentials of Vida Nueva, reworked our Statement of Faith, and had agreed that there would be two models to choose from, the original, "northern" model and the "southern" model that the North Georgia community had been granted permission to use. It was also at this time that the original VN Council had rebranded themselves to Mid-Hudson VN Council to help quell confusion.

The Vida Nueva All-Community meeting did worlds of good for the organization. It brought everyone together in brotherhood, it brought us all together in who we are, where we came from, and where we might be headed. In essence, we established what makes a Vida Nueva weekend, a "Vida Nueva weekend". This includes, but is not limited to, following the Essentials of Vida Nueva, following the Statement of Faith, and adhering to one of the two weekend models. The communities that had strayed from the two agreed upon weekend models pledged to get their communities back into compliance.

### **The Creation of Vida Nueva International**

As the years passed, there were still some communities who wanted to do their own thing and go their own ways. Although all of the communities were in agreement following the All-Community meeting, things were changing again. Perhaps things were forgotten, perhaps council members changed, perhaps Satan was trying to inch his way into the weekends, perhaps something else, or perhaps all of these. It was still not feasible for the Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva Council to monitor and ensure compliance with the agreed upon weekend models for all of the communities in the southern US. Permission was granted to start Vida Nueva International. Vida Nueva International was to oversee compliance with all of the Vida Nueva communities, acting as an agent for Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva. It was agreed upon that Vida Nueva International could solicit nominal dues from all of the communities to carry out their duties. These dues are something that even Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva contributes to. It is understood that Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva continues to hold full authority over the organization and its name and that the Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva Council may, at any time and for any reason, decommission Vida Nueva International. Thus, Vida Nueva International serves at the pleasure of Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva.

### **Vida Nueva Service Mark**

Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva is the only legal and sole owner of the “Vida Nueva” service mark. As is the case since the creation of a second Vida Nueva community, each community is only allowed to use the “Vida Nueva” name if they agree to follow the standards set forth by Mid-Hudson Vida Nueva. This includes following either one of the two approved weekend models.

### **Contact Information**

Questions regarding any of the above information can be directed to [info@mhvn.org](mailto:info@mhvn.org).