

# THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

## *The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America*

*Our mission: To promote spiritual renewal and spiritual growth of people and congregations through our renewal weekends, retreats, workshops and conferences.*

**January, 2021**

### LLRA Board of Directors

**Fred Schneider, President**  
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**The Rev. David Luecke, Ph. D.**

### **REPORT ON LUTHERAN LAY LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN UGANDA**

The ministry activities of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America have continued to grow strong in Eastern Deanery, especially in helping the young growing church to have men trained as Deacons/Evangelists who are expected to serve on a daily basis in the congregations of the Deanery. Lutheran Lay Renewal has funded generously the Lutheran Lay Leadership training, now it is the second quarter. Fifteen students have been recruited into this program. They shall be trained for one year and they shall be commissioned as Deacons who will help in teaching/preaching the word in congregations that don't have trained evangelists.



Leadership training is a ministry we use in Uganda to prepare men who would join the seminary to train as pastors for the Lutheran church of Uganda Eastern Deanery. We use this program also to train women who can help the congregations in handling Sunday school ministry, teaching the fellow women, Bible studies, and Catechism classes.

*Some of the students in leadership training at Christ Community Lutheran School*

Eastern Deanery, starting this year, shall be using this program as a special ordination course for individuals who cannot be recruited at the seminary. This was resolved because of the great need the Deanery has for the ordained men for Public Ministry.

We are also happy to report that the Deanery council resolved to have a Mission Training Center established in Magamaga Community on the land bought by Our Savior Lutheran Church. We therefore ask that Lutheran Lay Renewal of America support this project of constructing a center which shall also serve as a coordinating office for the LLRU. Having the Mission Training Center constructed shall serve as a multipurpose center not only as a meeting center for the students under training, coordinating office of LLRA activities, but it shall also serve as a conference hall for Deanery Activities in the future.

It is therefore, our humble prayer that Lutheran Lay Renewal of America continues to support this ministry as it shall ensure the Deanery of having men trained for service. The Bishop of the Church also being appreciative of the LLRA ministry in Uganda, he recommended that this partner organization is charged with the responsibility of supporting Leadership Training in the Deanery and also be asked to support the construction of a Ministry Training Center.

We are also planning tentatively to have a Lutheran Lay Renewal conference in May 2021 at the Lutheran Theological College, Uganda, Magamaga. This conference shall include the participants from Far Eastern Deanery. So we pray the LLRA Executive Director makes it to Uganda in the month of May this year. We are targeting to have 50 participants in the May conference.

**Rev. Peter M. Maganda**  
**Dean, LCU Eastern Deanery**

### **LLR PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE REFORMED LUTHERAN CHURCH OF RWANDA**

May God's grace and His peace be with you! People of God, praises and many thanks be to God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We have seen God's love during this difficult time of this pandemic of COVID-19.

God bless you Bill and God bless all members of your board, because you have done great for us, the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda. Because we are hungry, you have decided to feed us. We are happy and we see well that we are not alone, and while you heard us cry for food, you did not reject our request. The truth is that we have brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

The board of LLRA responded to us positively so that people could get food for our Christian families. This has strengthened the faith of our Pastors, lay leaders and all Christians of the RLCR. They saw God's grace and His love upon His people.

We appreciate you very much and God bless everyone who donated and God bless your families in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May you continue to pray for us because we still need more funds to buy food. From March until now, schools are not working and each family needs food, and we thank you for helping us to feed our Christian families. Find the attached Photos. God bless you and God bless your country of USA. In His Services!

**Pastor Jean Claude MANIRAGABA, Church President**





Pastor Jonathon Ngaboyisonga and some of the people of Rwempasha Lutheran Parish, Rwanda. This congregation is in need of \$12,000 to purchase land and \$32,589 to build a church.



Pastor Jean Paul Ntabanganyimana and some of the congregation of Ntoma Lutheran Parish, Rwanda. This congregation needs \$9,000 to purchase land and \$32,589 to build a church.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE LCU AND RLCR IS NEEDED**

Lutheran Lay Renewal provided much needed financial support for both the Lutheran Church of Uganda and the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda in 2020 and is continuing this support in 2021. These two church bodies are doing lots of amazing ministry with very limited resources but there is a lot more that can be accomplished with more financial support.

**At Lutheran Lay Renewal we believe that every congregation should be supporting at least one foreign mission!** If you or your congregation would like to join with us in supporting either the Lutheran Church of Uganda or the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda please get in touch with us. Contributions can be made directly to Lutheran Lay Renewal (we are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit ministry) or, if you prefer to work directly with either church body, please contact our office and we'll put you in touch with church leaders in either or both countries.

## SEEK THE LIFE OF PASSION IN THE SACRED ROMANCE

A life without a heart is not worth living. Our hearts are the key to the Christian life. It is in the heart that we come to know him and learn to live in his love. And yet life has taught all of us to ignore and distrust the deepest yearnings of our heart.

These statements are basic themes of *The Sacred Romance* by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge. They encourage us to be drawn to the heart of God. God's search for our hearts seems like a fairy tale, but this romance is true. God is wooing us back to him. Life's arrows teach us that we are not worthy of his love, and so we divert ourselves with smaller stories that are not fulfilling. Sensing that something is wrong, many try to fix it by tinkering with the outer life. But hearts are telling the truth—there really is something missing!

In earlier blogs, I addressed touchpoints for reaching out to those in a post-Christian culture that does not think in terms of sin and guilt. But they do think, "There's got to be more to life than what I am experiencing." Call this condition a general feeling of discomfort, illness, or uneasiness whose exact cause is difficult to identify. Lack of fulfillment is a good description. Feeling lost and alone is another angle. Discouragement is widespread, a term meaning literally a loss of heart, living life without passion.

The metaphor of a Fairy Tale is the closest one to the way in which Scriptures present the Gospel—as a Sacred Romance filled with mystery and awe. In earlier centuries, the church viewed the gospel as a Romance, a cosmic drama whose themes permeated our own stories and drew us into a redemptive wholeness. But in the Modern era, our rationalistic approach to life has stripped us of that, leaving a faith that is barely more than mere fact-telling. "Modern evangelicalism reads like an IRS 1040 form: It's true, all the data is there, but it doesn't take our breath away."

In the post-Modern era, all we have left is our small stories. The only reminder we have of a story beyond our own is the evening news, an arbitrary collection of scenes and images without any bigger picture into which we fit. Life is just a sequence of images and emotions without rhyme or reason. Our heart is made to live in a larger story; having lost that, we do the best we can by developing our own smaller dramas.

All we ever really wanted was to be loved. "This is love; not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Someone has noticed, someone has taken the initiative. God is not just out there somewhere in some vague way. He desires to talk with us in the quietness of our own heart through his Spirit, who is in us.

We sense that our true home abides within us in the Spirit of Christ. Out of this abiding love, Jesus transforms us. Our identity begins to coalesce around living with a good friend for a number of years and simply finding we have become more like him.

Curtis and Eldridge summarize the Sacred Romance this way: First, our lives are not a random series of events; they tell a Story that has meaning. We aren't in a movie we've arrived at twenty minutes late; we are in a Sacred Romance. We are being wooed. But we face an enemy with vile intentions. Is anyone in charge? Yes, there is someone strong and kind who notices us. Our Story is written by God, who is more than the author. He is the romantic lead in our personal drama. He created us for himself and now he is moving heaven and earth to restore us to his side

His wooing seems wild because he seeks to free our heart from the attachments and addictions we've chosen, thanks to the Arrows we've known. And we—who are we, really? We are not pond scum, nor are we the lead in the story. We are the Beloved, our hearts are the most important thing about us and our desire is wild because it is made for a God who is wild.

Where do we begin to share this Sacred Romance with those looking for something more? We start with the heart of God, his passion. This is not God alone but in relationships, intimacy beyond our wildest imagination. We long for intimacy because we are made in the image of perfect intimacy, beginning with the Trinity.

Once upon a time, there were God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They (he) provide the kind of home we've been looking for all our life. We know that God is a lover at heart, from all eternity.

What is your reaction to seeing your relationship with God as a Sacred Romance, like a fairy tale but one that is biblical and true? Do you agree that a life without heart is not worth living?

**The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph. D.**

### **JOIN US IN ISRAEL, JANUARY, 2022!**

Due to the worldwide pandemic, our Israel tour has been postponed until 2022. The new dates are January 10-19 and we are now accepting registrations. We have 52 exciting Old and New Testament sites on the tour that will greatly expand your knowledge of Christianity, Judaism, biblical history and archeology. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus in Nazareth, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Magdala, Bethany, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Jordan, Mt. Tabor (the Mount of Transfiguration), the Mount of Beatitudes, Caesarea Philippi, and enjoy a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. We'll also visit Masada, Qumran, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found, Herodian, Jericho, Caesarea Maritima and many other historic sites.

A tour of Israel truly is an experience you will treasure for the rest of your life. Tour arrangements are being handled by Imagine Tours and Travel, a company that has led hundreds of tours to Israel for over 30 years. Call or e-mail our office for a brochure and registration form, which we can send you either by mail or e-mail.



**MORNING SKY OVER JERUSALEM**



### **R.I.P VIRGINIA GORHAM 1923-2020**

Virginia Gorham, who with her late husband Bill was very active in Lutheran Lay Renewal for many decades, went to be with her Lord and Savior on September 6, two days before her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Gorhams were two of the most Christ-like people we have ever known and did so much to serve others in the leadership of this ministry, as well as in many other ways.

Our Executive Director spent a few days with them after they moved to North Carolina and remembers every morning starting with Bible study and prayer at the breakfast table. Both Virginia and Bill were well loved by everyone who knew them, and even though we miss them here we rejoice that they have been reunited in heaven. We pray for the Gorham family, that Our Lord will fill their hearts with his love, comfort and peace that passes all understanding.

## WE'RE CELEBRATING OUR 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY!

2021 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Lutheran Lay Renewal and one way we want to celebrate is by sharing stories and quotes from pastors and parishioners of churches about what this ministry has meant to them and their congregations. Do you have a story or quote to share with us about what the Lord has done in your life or in the life of your congregation through one of our renewal weekends, retreats, workshops or conferences? Please send it to our office and we'll share it in an upcoming issue of this newsletter. For now, here are some quotes to get us started and perhaps they will encourage you to schedule an LLR event this year.

*"The sincere personal testimonies of Jesus working in the lives of the LLR team members touched hearts and inspired each of us in a closer walk with the Lord. Your genuine love and praise for our Savior was contagious! You have our heartfelt appreciation for bringing new life and energy back into our church. As a whole, the LLR weekend left the participants feeling renewed and strengthened to serve God better. Thank you for responding to God's call to provide Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church with a Spirit-filled and faith-strengthening weekend." - Pastor Fred Schenker, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wexford, PA*

*"LLR was a very strong program at Christ the King. The result has been a real shift in our ministry as a congregation. We are growing a renewed focus on Small Group Ministry, and there has been a real desire to find new ways to build relationships. We already had a strong presence in our community, and growing in our relationships with each other has helped make that even stronger." - Pastor Jeff Kallevig, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Tigard, OR*

*"I had wonderful experiences in the past at Lutheran Lay Renewals and was confident in the outcome of our weekend at Lake Wylie Lutheran Church. The personal testimonies were a critical element to encourage greater spiritual commitment and service. The weekend also provided a great boost to the core leadership: encouraging, empowering, and especially in stimulating spiritual growth. The small group meetings in homes help people to be ready to share with fellow members and raise the Sunday pew friendship to a much deeper, more personal and spiritual level. The outcome of LLR in time will change the general nature of the congregation to be a vibrant assembly instead of a lukewarm institution. It happened at Lake Wylie Lutheran beyond any outcome I could have imagined." - Bob Schilke, Stewardship Committee Chair, Lake Wylie Lutheran Church, Fort Mill, SC*

*"The Renewal was everything we had hoped for and more. Our church had a wonderful spiritual awakening and our sense of unity and mission has been energized and firmly established." - Pastor Richard Schowalter, Carlton Hills Lutheran Church, Santee, CA*

*"We were filled with the Spirit for three wonderful days and blessed by the ministry of the excellent visiting team that came to us." - Jim McDonald, General Chairman, Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Rehoboth Beach, DE*

*"My friends, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for the most joyous, uplifting experience I have had in my life to date! I know I speak for all involved at Grace Church when I say thank you as well for helping to create a spark in us and for awakening a stirring inside to recommit our time, talents and treasures to God. You are all so dear to me and I know we have made lasting friendships through Jesus Christ. May God continue to bless you all as you work through your ministries! My only regret is that the weekend flew by too fast! I needed more like a week with you all!" - Lynda Steuer, General Chair, Grace Lutheran Church, Rochester, PA*

*"Dear Pastor Peter, I am humbled to write to you about the impact of the Lay Renewal programme in our church. Since the programme was introduced it has made me vibrant in church through preaching the Word of God to the Christians in various places, through participating in the outreach ministries, and to associate with other Christians. I hereby thank the Brains and Souls of the people that are chosen by God for the introduction of the Lay Renewal weekend programme to our school." - Joseph, Trinity Lutheran Church, Iganga, Uganda*

*“Last month I attended a workshop entitled, “Sharing Your Faith” led by (Lutheran Lay Renewal). It was fantastic. Not only was the workshop well prepared and spiritually informative, it was also extremely inspirational. In our current culture of information overload, it was refreshing to hear someone speak intimately and genuinely about their experience with the living God and His Son. (The leader’s) presentation was so natural and Spirit led, that I can confidently recommend it to anyone looking to further their confidence in sharing their own faith experience and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you all for the work you are doing as ambassadors for Christ in this world. Please keep it up!” - Pastor Steven Krogh, Grace American Lutheran Church, Rancho Cordova, CA*

*“The team that led the spiritual transformation workshops at Holy Cross was first-class. They knew their material well, demonstrating not only an academic knowledge of the subject, but an experiential acquaintance with the spiritual life in the deep Christian tradition to buttress it. Their passion for Christ, Lutheran grounding in the dynamics of Law and Gospel, and familiarity with the tradition catholic gave their presentations (particularly the question and answer sessions) a profundity often lacking in the slickly produced offerings of ministries promoted by major publishing houses. I would highly recommend them as an integrated part of your congregation's catechetical and Christian formation ministries.” - Rev. Brett Jenkins, STS Pastor, Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nazareth, PA*

*"It was a great experience that will certainly enhance the life of the church in many ways. The team was superb in leading discussion groups." - Pastor Michael Pozzutto, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Bolivar, OH*

**“Like” us on Facebook - Lutheran Lay Renewal of America**

**We post all of our upcoming events on our Facebook page, as well as a thought for the week every week.**

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## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

- Healing for Elaine Schomaker, Alexis Gurnard, Dan and Kathie Klueg
  - For the Lord’s protection over all doctors, nurses and other hospital workers, police officers, firefighters and all men and women in our armed forces
  - For peace, harmony and reconciliation in the United States
  - For the Lord’s blessings on our ministry in the U.S., Uganda and Rwanda, and for the financial resources that are needed for this ministry
  - For wisdom and guidance for the LLRA Board of Directors, as we seek to grow and expand our ministry
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***Lutheran Lay Renewal of America is eligible to receive Choice Dollars Grant Funds from the Thrivent Financial Choice Dollars program. We are grateful to Thrivent Financial, and those individuals who designate their Choice Dollars to us, for their support of LLRA and its ministry!***

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*LLRA is a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization and depends on contributions from churches and individuals who have benefited from our ministry to help us continue to bring this ministry to more and more congregations all across America - and now also to Uganda and Rwanda!*

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