

THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971

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Newsletter Editor – Liz Lawless

A BUSY FEBRUARY IN CALIFORNIA AND PENNSYLVANIA

During February LLR presented two retreats and three workshops at churches in California and Pennsylvania. On February 11 we were at Immanuel Lutheran, Easton (Fresno), CA for a half day retreat on Spiritual Transformation and we returned there on Sunday, February 12 for a one hour workshop on Sharing Your Faith.

One of those who attended both events wrote the following: “Bill Oehlschlager came to Immanuel Lutheran Church on February 11 and 12, 2017. I was blessed to have attended both events where Bill spoke. Bill ... presented a very powerful message of the gospel. His personal testimony and relationship with Jesus Christ empower him to relate well his message of sharing the gospel. There were people in attendance during the 2 days that ranged in age from early teens to near 80 year olds and the entire spectrum in between. By observing the body language during and comments overheard after his talks his message spoke to all of us. Bill’s ministry is awesome and something that made me proud to be a part of the NALC.”

Pastor Kristopher Madsen added the following: “Bill Oehlschlager’s presentations on spiritual renewal and sharing the faith was a highlight of my time in congregational ministry. Our congregation has been focusing on intergenerational ministry (we had junior high to 80-somethings present) and there was something in Bill’s presentations for everyone in attendance. The generations present were brought together in a powerful way that can only be identified as the work of the Holy Spirit. Bill brings much insight and wisdom to his presentations both from his own life story as well as pulling in thoughts and insights of voices of the church across the ages like Augustine, Kempis, Luther, and Mother Theresa. I’m grateful for the work and ministry of Lutheran Lay Renewal and encourage congregations to make good use of this wonderful ministry.”

On February 18 we led a Spiritual Transformation retreat at St. John’s Lutheran, Los Banos, CA and on February 19 a Sharing Your Faith workshop at Concordia Lutheran, Kingsburg, CA. Elaine Olson of Concordia, Kingsburg wrote the following about the workshop there: “The Share Your Faith Workshop teaches that we are created to be in a relationship with God. Many people make attempts to fill their lives with other things, but will never be satisfied by them. As we mature, we always need to learn and grow in our faith so that we do not grow away from it. God uses us to share the Gospel with others. Praying with them, sharing what God has done in our lives, and showing unconditional

love are ways we can reach out and build relationships. We should not fear failure because it is the Spirit who saves.”

On Sunday, February 26 we presented a Sharing Your Faith workshop at Springdale Lutheran, West Sunbury, PA. Those present enjoyed the conversation so much they decided to continue the workshop for another hour on Sunday, March 5.

To schedule any of our events: renewal weekends, retreats or workshops, contact our National Office at 724-287-5151.

As we commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, in 2017, some of the words of the famous pastor, Martin Luther, seem very timely. Sharing just a few quotes from his writings here & throughout the newsletter:

“Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth; help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart.”

“Faith is permitting ourselves to be seized by the things we do not see.”

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As we start our forty days’ Lenten journey, with our Lord, there is thankfulness, disbelief and humbleness that our Lord Jesus Christ loved us so much that he bore the agony, humiliation and suffering on the Cross. Throughout this journey we contemplate the power of the gospel in its telling of what Christ did for all of us. At the end of our journey, we join Christ at the foot of the cross, on our knees, knowing we will join Him, again, one day in his heavenly home with his Father.

Knowing we are dependent on God’s grace, I am mindful of the words of Martin Luther when he gave the following explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed:

“I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the power of the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts and sanctified and kept me in true faith....”

In Lutheran Lay Renewal we look to this coming year, in true faith, as one filled with hope, dedication and commitment to be a “light” to the world as we continue to be encouraged by the contacts our Outreach Director, Bill Oehlschlager, has made with pastors and their congregations. My husband and I had the pleasure of having Bill as our guest when he was in California for ten days recently. Bill remains fervent in his passion for this ministry.

Your continued support, financially, is needed and so greatly appreciated. We know the Lord wants this ministry to thrive and your support is so important, especially your prayer support. In these coming weeks, as we make our Lenten journey, keep Lutheran Lay Renewal close to your heart. Pray, also, that our nation continues to be “One Nation Under God.”

In Christ’ Love –
Elaine Schomaker
President of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

*“Every man must do two things alone; he must do his own believing and his own dying.” -
Martin Luther*

FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT

What Wondrous Love is This?

The world is a mess! People are angry, self-righteous, self-absorbed, violent, hateful and basically sinful. It certainly isn't the world God created for us. And if you said those are appropriate adjectives for the world today, think again. For they also can describe the world at the time of Jesus. People haven't changed much. They are still in need of a Savior. Unfortunately, most of the world's population doesn't see Jesus as the answer. However, let's not focus on the ills of the world but just the opposite; love. And sometimes it can be a thin line between love and hate. Jesus experienced that full well. On Palm Sunday, he rode into Jerusalem with the crowds shouting Hosanna! By Friday, our Lord would be despised and rejected and ultimately die on the cross.

Yet on the night he was betrayed, Jesus' words to the disciples showed his love for them and all believers. As they left the upper room headed for the Mount of Olives, He instructs the disciples for the last time. The context of John 15 seems similar to a parent who drops their child off at college for the first time. The parent reminds the child of the dos and don'ts - all of life's lessons in a hurried goodbye. Jesus tells the disciples to remain in his love and bear much fruit to the glory of the Father. He assures them that same love the Father has for the Son, He gives to them also. Christ commands them to love one another following His example. Jesus also refers to them as friends and not mere servants. He promises the Holy Spirit to help them after He is gone. In addition, Jesus warns them about the hatred of the world but not to fear because He has overcome the world. ***What Wondrous Love is This?*** In true obedience to the Father, Jesus laid down his life for his friends, no greater love than this. The world does not understand this kind of sacrifice and love.

This Lent, I want to have more than just personal reflection time. I need to look beyond myself, to reflect Christ's love to others and to see the reflection of Christ in others. For the Father created us all and loves all, even those we deem unlovable or who are not like us. Many are in the habit of 'giving up' something for Lent as an outward sign of sacrifice and faith. I propose not to deny but instead add: add love, live love, show love and find love in others. Don't just pass by someone with trite greetings; stop, take time to listen, make eye contact, actually say that prayer you promised, extend a phone call, invite the lonely, make the first move. And not just to acquaintances, but to family too (possibly the hardest). What Wondrous Love is this? We'll know the fullness of that love someday in heaven. For now, this world needs someone to love it, be the one.

Lori Sardiga, Vice President, Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

What Wondrous Love Is This (An American Folk Hymn)

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of bliss

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on;

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on.

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing His love for me,

And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,

And through eternity I'll sing on.

SCHEDULED RENEWAL EVENTS

May 20, 2017 Listening For the Spirit Workshop
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Irwin PA
The Rev. Clifton Suehr, Pastor
The Rev. Dave Luecke Ph.D., Workshop Leader

June 3, 2017 Listening For the Spirit Workshop
Christ Lutheran Church, Warren MI
The Rev. Daniel Cave, Pastor
The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph.D., Workshop Leader

Note: Many other events are in the early planning stages; be sure to check our web site often at www.lutheranrenewal.com, where the schedule is always up to date!

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Dan Klueg - for full recovery of his back.
- For Kathie Klueg - for full recovery for her leg.
- For healing for Dick and Bev Brown.
- For the Lord's safety & protection for all police officers and firefighters
- For the Lord's safety & protection for all men and women in our armed forces as they fight for our continued freedom and against aggression by those who would harm us.
- For the LLRA Board as they deal with the future of this ministry. Financial resources and new team members are greatly needed.
- Thanksgiving for the continuous presence of the Holy Spirit in our LLRA ministry!

A reminder that LLRA is a tax exempt 501 (c) 3 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.

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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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Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

We post all of our upcoming events on our Facebook page at least a week in advance.

"So when the devil throws your sins in your face & 'declares that you deserve death', tell him this 'I admit that I deserve death & hell, so what of it? For I know One who suffered & made satisfaction on my behalf. His Name is Jesus Christ, Son of God & where he is, there I shall be also.'" Martin Luther