

THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971

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Newsletter Editor
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SPOT THE SPIRIT WORKSHOP

Pastor Dave Luecke, Ph.D., an LLRA Board member, presented his Spot the Spirit workshop at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Irwin, PA (Pittsburgh area) on Saturday, May 20. Pastor Luecke has been presenting this workshop at many churches in Ohio and Pennsylvania over the last few years.

Holy Trinity Parishioner Jerry Kuhn wrote the following about the event:

“We had the pleasure of hosting Pastor Dave Luecke in May. He led members of our congregation and neighboring churches in his How to Spot the Holy Spirit Workshop. This was a great way to cover a lot of material in a short time, meeting time challenges most of us encounter. The workshop was broken into four segments of learning and small group discussion. The topics started as individual perspectives, then grew to our role in the church. The discussions in the small groups were excellent and helped to develop our relationship with the Holy Spirit and between congregational members. The concluding section was focused on our role in the church and many good ideas came from the discussion that should help our church grow in faith. We are planning several reunion meetings to keep us growing in the Holy Spirit. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and thought the time just flew by as the Spirit moved us in wonderful ways. We appreciate Dave’s passion and perspectives on how to grow the church through the Holy Spirit.”

Lutheran Lay Renewal is planning to offer this workshop again at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Allison Park, PA on Saturday, August 19 and then again at Trinity School for Ministry/North American Lutheran Seminary on Saturday, October 7. Check the Scheduled Events page in this newsletter or contact our national office for more details.

“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.” - Martin Luther

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” - Martin Luther

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Summer is just around the corner. For most students it means a “break” from their academic studies and a chance to enjoy the time off to relax and engage in summertime activities. For others it may mean having a part-time job before classes begin again. All of us have an agenda for the fast approaching summer.

Where is the Holy Spirit fitting into our lives during these coming months? Where and how is the Holy Spirit fitting into my life? That question is very prominent and vibrant in my mind after hearing the Sunday sermon in today’s church service. The scripture lesson was taken from John 14:15-21. Those verses are known as “The promise of the Spirit”. It is a favorite scripture of mine where we are promised that Christ will not leave us alone after His crucifixion and ascension, but an advocate or comforter, sent from His Father, “may abide with you forever”. (King James)

The promise of the Holy Spirit being with me forever is humbling, but even more so, the promise that He dwells within me! I pray that I never take for granted that presence or the Spirit’s power in every aspect of my life. As I look to my role as President of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America, I am struck by how present the Holy Spirit has been in our ministry.

Recently, I attended the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly, and had the privilege of talking with many of the assembly attendees, giving them information about our ministry. It was a pleasure to speak of the blessings churches have voiced after experiencing one of Lutheran Lay Renewal’s ministry offerings.

Our Outreach Director, Bill Oehlschlager, is tireless in his commitment to reach out to pastors and their congregations. Please look at our web site and note what is coming up in the future. As you look through the rest of the newsletter, note the article from our Vice President, Lori Sardiga and the article explaining the process for the upcoming Board elections in August.

Earlier I spoke of the Spirit’s presence in our ministry. That presence is seen and felt through the constant support of your prayers and financial generosity. Thank you for your faithfulness. Keep Lutheran Lay Renewal of America close to your heart and continue to pray for our nation.

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

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.”

“I have held many things in my hands; and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.”

FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT JUST DO IT!

Exercise. I have struggled with it for years. Though I tried various methods of working out, nothing seemed to motivate me for long. Of course, I always had a plausible excuse for my lack of perseverance, i.e. doesn't fit into my schedule, too far away, too hard, too old, yada, yada yada. Then it happened. A new gym opened in my neighborhood only a 2-minute drive from my house and open 24/7. My excuses were no longer valid. So, after a mere 6 months of procrastination, I finally found myself taking the first step and walked through the doors of the gym. It was quite humbling and intimidating at first. And clearly, I was one of the oldest people there. However, I got over it and actually found myself enjoying what the gym had to offer. I think I am on my way to starting a new good habit and look forward to 'working out.'

This same scenario can apply to our spiritual life. You've heard it before-the way to a healthy relationship with our Lord is to develop a daily devotional or prayer life. Maybe you already have one-terrific! But for many others it may be a struggle to set a time for devotions. One finds life too busy, too many distractions, too hard to understand, too early, too late, too tired, too many excuses! We know our daily walk with the Lord should be a priority- perhaps on Sunday we intend to start a quiet time on Monday only to find Sunday's commitment doesn't fit into **our** Monday's plans. James beckons us, "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:8). The truth is you can't expect a relationship with the Lord to grow if you keep your distance. Just like you can't expect to get physically fit by just peering into the gym. One has to enter into a commitment. You may counter by saying, "I exercise my faith by what I do." Great! James even confirms faith without deeds is dead (2:26). But make no mistake we are saved by grace alone through faith alone and not by deeds alone (Eph. 2:8-10). What God really wants is you. Isaiah 49:16 reminds us, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands". Further, I John 3:1 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are!" The heavenly Father thinks the world of us. Do we show him the same? How can you trust in the Lord if you don't know of His love, power and might? Our time to stay in touch with the Lord is in the routine of everyday life. Waiting until you have a crisis will only leave you in a panic and feeling insecure. Remember, you don't have to do it alone; your trainer is the Holy Spirit, the encourager. "When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). You need not be intimidated, but do humble yourself and ask the Spirit to reveal God to you (1Cor.2:10).

Just talking about exercise does not make one physically fit; it takes time and discipline. Likewise, just hearing the word of God once a week does not strengthen faith. Years ago, during Lent, I decided to make a sacrifice of my time. So, I added devotional time at the start of my day. Soon I was looking forward to my early morning meetings with the Lord. It has helped me to focus on Him and gets me through the day.

Now that time is here, our busy lives become preoccupied with vacations and other events. So, like exercise, plan your devotion time and make it a priority. Then "just do it."

Have a blessed and safe summer,

Lori Sardiga
Vice President of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

"It (our renewal weekend) was positive, inspiring, and helped folks feel more comfortable in sharing their faith. I feel honored and blessed by the work of the visiting team." - Pastor Roger Keller, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Saxonburg, PA

Quotes of Martin Luther

Martin Luther is a man whose historical act, in 1517, of posting his theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, was the start of the Reformation which all Lutheran churches are celebrating this year as the 500th anniversary approaches. Martin Luther was a man who thought deeply and took his faith and relationship with God seriously.

Below are some of his famous quotes:

"Faith cannot be inherited or gained by being baptized into a church. Faith is a matter between the individual and God."

"Is it not wonderful news to believe that salvation lies outside ourselves!"

"To gather with God's people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer."

"Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world."

"Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitation of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us."

"The Bible is the cradle wherein Christ is laid."

Nominations for Members of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors will be electing a President, Secretary and one at large Board member at its annual meeting in August. Nominations for Officers and Directors of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America are due no later than July 10. Nominations may be made by any person who has served on a Lutheran Lay Renewal team within the last five years, or by any person who has made a financial contribution to LLR within the past two years. Persons who meet these criteria may nominate themselves or other persons. Nominations, including all contact information, should be sent to the current President (Elaine Schomaker, eschomaker@sbcglobal.net), including the nominee's name, mailing address, phone number and email address.

WHY DID JESUS FOLD THE NAPKIN?

An unusual approach to a biblical story. Why did Jesus fold the linen burial cloth after His resurrection? I never noticed this . . .

The gospel of John (20:1-10) tells us that the napkin, which was placed over the face of Jesus, was not just thrown aside like the grave clothes. The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded, and was placed at the head of that stony coffin.

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple,

the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put Him?" Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Is that important? Absolutely! Is it really significant? Yes! In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand a little bit about Hebrew tradition of that day. The folded napkin had to do with the Master and Servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition.

When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was exactly the way the master wanted it. The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out of sight, until the master had finished eating, and the servant would not dare touch that table, until the master was finished. Now if the master was done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded napkin meant, "I'm done. But if the master got up from the table and folded his napkin and laid it beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because . . . The folded napkin meant, "I'm coming back!" **HE IS COMING BACK! THANK YOU JESUS! YOU ARE COMING BACK!**

Editor's Note: I received the article above from a Biblical Scholar Christian Friend of ours. This article really touched my heart and I hope that it does yours also!

"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

SCHEDULED RENEWAL EVENTS

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| August 19 | Spot the Spirit Workshop
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Allison Park, PA (North Park)
The Rev. Dr. Fred Schenker, Pastor
The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph. D., Workshop Leader |
| October 7 | Spot the Spirit Workshop
Trinity School for Ministry/North American Lutheran Seminary
Ambridge, PA
The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph.D., Workshop Leader |
| October 20-22 | Renewal Weekend
Faith Lutheran Church
Meadow Vista, CA
The Rev. Charlane Lines, Pastor
Stan Anderson, Coordinator |

"The sincerity and willingness of team members, as well as their faith stories, was very powerful. Dick's sermon stressing service and witness was extremely well done and inspiring." - Pastor Donald Carlson, Calvary Lutheran Church, Grants Pass, OR"

"The weekend gave the members opportunities to share their faith stories with one another. This has greatly strengthened our community and our resolve to share that faith with others. We are more excited and aware about how God is present and active among us." - Pastor Scott KuechenmesiterHall, Nativity Lutheran Church, Allison Park, PA

"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

"Fantastic!! Those who participated in the entire weekend were truly blessed. We were all blessed by the testimonies of the team members and encouraged to begin to tell our own. I think folks loved the small group meetings and a chance to sit and talk with one another about faith and life. Thanks again to the team for a wonderful weekend." - Pastor Bob Stevens, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Pasadena, MD

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.