

THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

An array of beautiful fall colors will soon grace the forests and woodlands across the United States in a few weeks. It brings to mind the words of Psalm 96:12 -

*“Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.” – NIV*

Our nation is facing challenges and many people are facing personal challenges. How wonderful that we know the ultimate truth of God’s love for His people. In Lutheran Lay Renewal of America the importance of that truth is evident in every aspect of our ministry and brings to mind the mission statement of my home church - “To lead People Into the Life-Changing Love of Jesus Christ.” Our renewal teams welcome the opportunity to share that love. Our Lord and Savior has His arms opened wide and just waiting for us to rush into them. Many may ask ‘How is that possible’? The words of Jeremiah come to mind and are very poignant:

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” - Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

We, in Lutheran Lay Renewal of America, are optimistic and excited about new opportunities to bring our ministry to more states in the coming months. Our Outreach Director, Bill Oehlschlager, continues to expand our ministry’s outreach. Pastor Dave Luecke’s workshop on “Spot the Spirit” has been received enthusiastically on the East and West Coast. Note the Events Page and the schedule of future events. Keep the renewal team in prayer as they prepare for the weekend of October 20-22, 2017, at Faith Lutheran Church in Meadow Vista, CA.

We pray that the wondrous love of our Heavenly Father will be apparent in all our endeavors. We could not thrive in this ministry without your prayerful support and are grateful for the financial support that continues to be a blessing to LLRA. Thank you for your belief in our ministry. Please pray for our nation, and the world, that God’s peace may be found.

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

QUOTES OF MARTIN LUTHER

As noted in our last newsletter, we are commemorating the 500th year of the Reformation, when Martin Luther's historical act, in 1517, of posting his theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, turned the religious world upside down. As revealed in the latest film on Martin Luther – *"Martin Luther: An Idea that Changed the World"* Luther pursues an energetic quest for truth. Luther struggled with many questions such as *"Who am I?"*, *"What is my purpose?"* and *"How do I get right with God?"* Martin Luther was a man who thought deeply and took his faith and relationship with God seriously.

We printed some of his quotes in the last two newsletters and are sharing more in this issue.

- ❖ "Faith must trample under foot all reason, sense and understanding."
- ❖ "Peace is more important than all justice; and peace was not made for the sake of justice, but justice for the sake of peace."
- ❖ "If I'm not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there."
- ❖ "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and in clouds and stars."
- ❖ "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."
- ❖ "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."
- ❖ "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."
- ❖ "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."
- ❖ "One learns more of Christ in being married and rearing children than in several lifetimes spent in study in a monastery."
- ❖ "In his life Christ is an example showing us how to live, in his death he is a sacrifice satisfying our sins, in his resurrection a conqueror, in his ascension a king, in his intercession a high priest."

LLRA BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to Elaine Schomaker, who was re-elected as President of the LLRA Board and to Linda Shipman, who was re-elected as Secretary. Both will be eligible for another two years' term in 2019.

The Weak Link In Our Gospel Presentation An Interpretation of Heinrich Schwan's "Propositions on Unevangelical Practice" By Pastor Dave Luecke, Ph.D.

Lutherans place high value on being "evangelical." The word means simply Good News. The formal name of our defining theology is the Confessions of the *Evangelical* Lutheran Church. What the adjective "evangelical" means can be the source of much confusion, especially when media have turned it into the noun "*Evangelicals*" to describe basically conservative Protestants. Add to the confusion the name chosen by the more liberal branch of Lutherans as "The *Evangelical* Lutheran Church of America."

I am using it here as an adjective to describe "ministry practices"—how pastors and congregations can apply the biblical Good News to specific situations in their life together. Stimulation for this discussion comes from an essay written 150 years ago by Pastor Heinrich Schwan as he addressed the first convention of the Central District of The Lutheran Church of Missouri, Ohio and other States. He went on to become President of the Synod. I think of him every time in downtown Cleveland as I drive by the buildings of Zion Lutheran, which he planted and pastored for 48 years.

His essay is entitled "Propositions on Unevangelical Practice," translated into English in the May 1945 issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*.

Imagine Pastor Schwan addressing a gathering of perhaps fifty pastors to work out the distinctive feature of ministry done by this new church body. Why does he choose to focus on the negative *unevangelical* practice? He was working out of a tradition that recognized it is easier to identify something by what it is not. Classical theologians called it the *via negativa*. Schwan was also classical in defining the opposite of "evangelical" as "legalistic," building on the distinction the Apostle Paul made between Law and Gospel in Galatians 3. C. F. Walther expanded on that pairing with his lectures on *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, still read today. While the distinction seems simple, its application can be difficult, depending on circumstances.

As I read Schwan, we today are operating with a too narrow understanding of the Gospel. A new appreciation of his emphases may be able to help us improve ministry practices that can lead to greater effectiveness in ministering to newer generations shaped by the great changes in our social culture. They typically are not motivated by traditional loyalties, or by learning right behavior or by "getting to heaven." Many are searching for a God who does things here and now and with whom they can develop a closer relationship. They are open to the supernatural and long to be "found" and to find community.

Here is Schwan's definition of Gospel: "Since we expect justification before God, the renewal of the heart, and the fruits of the Spirit only through the Gospel, we in everything that we do have this one thing in mind, to give free course and sway to the Gospel" (Proposition 2). To Schwan the Gospel has three components: justification by faith, renewal of the heart, and fruits of the Spirit. Traditionally we have focused rightfully on justification by grace through faith and the work done by Christ to accomplish this for us. We do talk about the new spiritual nature different from our old human nature. But in sermons and pastoral applications we typically hear little about the power of the Spirit and the fruit he produces. Emphasizing the work of the Spirit is a key to greater effectiveness today.

Schwan's generation of churchmen had a background different from those in living memory today. He notes "our origin in Pietistic circles" (Proposition 19). That first generation were products of the *Erweckungsbewegen*, the Awakening Movement in Germany, specifically as it emerged in Dresden in

the early decades of the 19th century. Pietism got a bad rap in recent generations, a reputation for overemphasis on specific “sanctified” behaviors and thus being too legalistic. That’s the part we remember and dismiss today. Indeed it is because of their shared origins in Pietism that Schwan chose this topic legalism and develops it in great detail. In rejecting legalism, however, today we regrettably overlook several spiritual life-giving basic assumptions of that movement among Lutherans in the 18th century and its 19th century renewal. I propose it is time for a 21st century re-renewal of emphasis on the Good News not only of justification by grace through faith but also on God’s action in sending the Spirit to renew hearts and produce his special fruit.

Johann Arndt is recognized as the father of that movement. We are told that his devotional book *True Christianity* was brought with them by most German immigrants, second in popularity only to the Bible. Here is how he states the basics of the movement: “True knowledge of Christ is ignited by the Spirit in our hearts as a new light that becomes ever brighter like a mirror that is polished, or as a small child grows and matures daily in body.” Those believers in whom the Spirit had ignited “true” faith were described as “awakened.” Such higher level of more authentic heart-felt knowledge became available only by the Spirit’s work, and it was expected to continually grow through the Spirit’s ongoing work. One current scholar notes how Pietism advocated a shift from legal to biological language, from external to an internal work of God, and to a heavy emphasis on growth—growth in knowledge but also growth in grace.

Christian theology is recognized as the art of keeping a balance among different biblical emphases. Lutherans are rightfully known for our stress on Paul’s teaching that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. We are, I believe, out of balance with our insufficient emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s work of awakening and motivating new life in Christ. For me Gordon Fee in his study of the 143 passages on the Spirit in Paul’s writing (*God’s Empowering Presence*) has amply demonstrated that the Spirit as God’s empowering presence in lives today is as central to Paul’s ministry practices as his stress on justification by faith. Christ earned this change in a relationship with God. The Spirit empowers living out this changed identity. Christ is our advocate before the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Father and Son’s advocate and empowering presence with believers in daily living.

Schwan’s positive Pietist assumptions about internal continuous growth worked by the Spirit lie behind several of his striking propositions.

4. The Law is used in an evangelical way to submit a divine norm for manifestations of the new life which spontaneously arises through the evangelical message.

6. Evangelical practice demands manifestation of faith and love but does not issue commands as far as aim, amount and mode are concerned.

9. Since evangelical practice does not use the law to aid the Gospel in its real function, and since it expects the fruit of the Spirit to be produced solely by the Gospel, it is willing to wait for them.

10. Evangelical practice considers nothing an essential gain that does not come through the Gospel, that is, through faith; therefore it rather bears with all manner of defects, imperfections, and sins than to remove them merely in an external manner.

16. Evangelical knowledge and disposition should issue in evangelical behavior, but do so rather seldom and slowly.

17. Usually we do not advance beyond legalism or we fall into antinomian laxity; to such an extent the Gospel is foreign to our nature.

18. There is danger in both directions. For us at present the greater danger is still in the direction of legalism.

22. The more that fiery zeal asserts itself which does not permit love to be the queen of all commandments, which spurns Christian wisdom and which in teaching, reproving or admonishing in reality applies coercion—worst even moral coercion, the more unevangelical our practice gets to be.

Some of the examples of unevangelical practices listed by Schwan are:

- Overabundant castigation of individual sins, unwholesome conditions or perhaps even matters of personal dislike

- Portraying well known sins of well-known persons instead of laying bare roots behind the sin
- Unnecessary, premature or unedifying polemics
- Urging that repentance and faith be manifested, instead of preaching that which produces repentance and faith
- Attaching conditions to the Gospel promises
- Presentation of the grace of God only to build demands on such presentation
- Demanding more for admission to the Lord's Supper than is absolutely required for its salutary use
- Adherence to the principle that the salvation or damnation of the deceased must be asserted publicly
- To judge one's attitude of the heart on the basis of a few words and works
- Making the chasm between those who are in and those who are outside the congregation really large, instead of building bridges for the opponents and for those who are on the outside.

Pietist Strengths

Heinrich Schwan was addressing pastoral colleagues who shared Pietist assumptions present in that early generation of Lutheran pastors newly immigrated to mid-West America. Pietist movements, like several in previous centuries, go through cycles. They begin in reaction against church life that has become sterile moralism, losing its spiritual power to energize participants in distinctly Christian living. This leads to rediscovery of the full biblical Gospel that changes believers. What too often follows, though, is an emphasis on manifestations of a renewed life, on specific prescribed behaviors. Such focus on externalities too often loses perspective on the underlying dynamics of love and faith that characterize the authentic God-given renewal. The Good News is not only what by God's grace Christ did for us in his death and resurrection but also what by grace God does for believers now by sending the gift of the Spirit who grows the product of changed hearts, fruit like love, joy, and peace.

The Awakening Movement in Germany that shaped that early generation began with rediscovery of Luther's profound understanding of the Gospel. The depth of his insights had largely been lost in the previous 18th century pietistic cycle that ended in the Enlightenment emphasis on improving life through better application of human reason. In re-discovering Luther, Heinrich Schwan's generation also rediscovered the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives and bring renewal, as reflected in his three-part description of the Good News—justification by grace as well as lives renewed by the gifts and fruit of the Spirit (Proposition 2).

That movement shaped an American church life that grew rapidly among German and Scandinavian immigrants. The Pietists had the mission zeal to reach out to other immigrants. Heinrich Muhlenberg did so in the latter part of the 18th century on the East Coast. He was from the Pietist center at the University of Halle. The first several generations of leaders with Pietist roots in what became the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod built institutions to raise up pastors to reach out to and care for the heavy flow of immigrants in the latter part of the 19th century. The Pietists took the lead in developing service institutions like Lutheran orphanages and Lutheran hospitals.

What was distinctive about those early generations of Lutherans in America was their Spirit-shaped motivation to reach out to others. "Motivation" is a modern term to describe inner drives which stimulate behaviors that satisfy those drives. Such "motives" are often irrational and do not respond to the application of reasoning in ministry. Paul's distinction between living according to the flesh or according to the Spirit amounts to describing a change in motivation, out of which come changed behaviors. Today we can clarify the role of the Spirit as the agent for changed personal motivation of individuals gathered around the Word. Historically Lutherans joined Calvinists in denying God's miraculous actions today, that is, denying outcomes for which there is no natural explanation. What Heinrich Schwan was focused on is waiting upon the Spirit to change basic motivations in specific believers, something that happens seldom and usually slowly. Occasionally, though, the miraculous nature is more apparent in sudden awakenings or conversions.

The Pietist “brand” today is associated with excessive legalism evident in later generations. I am proposing to “rebrand” Pietism with the mission instincts of the earlier generations. This means elevating for us their understanding of the Holy Spirit as the means by which lives are renewed and changed through the Gospel. This means strengthening what has become the weak link in our presentation of the Good News today. The question for us today is whether we can improve our ways of waiting upon the Spirit.

Propositions for Improving Evangelical Practices Today

Legalistic practice emphasizes the negative, the sinful behaviors we do. Evangelical practice, in contrast, emphasizes the positive of what God does in freeing us from the grip of sin first through the new status he gives us—justified in his sight. That is the first part of the Good News. The rest of the story is that he by grace sends the gift of his Spirit to actually change our inner being to grow us into our new life in Christ

Heinrich Schwan, a practicing pastor, was dealing with profound biblical truths that can easily go out of focus when ministering to a congregation of believers. The Apostle Paul shaped the Good News out of his work of planting and building up congregations in his time. He clearly recognized the pivotal role of the Spirit in church life. His insights in the 143 passages on the Spirit in his letters have gone through almost twenty centuries of interpretative filters addressed to the changing needs of institutional churches. Our Lutheran heritage has filtered out much of Paul’s radical understanding of the Spirit’s work. It makes sense to put those filters aside and deal directly with Paul’s dependence on God’s empowering presence as basic to the Good News we want to share.

Drawing on insights from the Pietists, I offer some propositions to guide improved evangelical practices in our ministry today:

1. “The Holy Spirit changes human spirit” (John 3: 6). The Spirit is given as a gift to change our motivation, out of which come changed behaviors. The supernatural intervenes in the natural. Such interventions can be called miracles.
2. We rely too much on logical reasoning to motivate behavior and end up appealing to guilt, which depends on loyalty to shape behavior.
3. To be made holy (sanctification) has less to do with virtuous behavior and more to do with having the image of God restored. The essence of God is love. Living out love and the other fruit of the Spirit is the process of personal sanctification.
4. God intends for his children to grow, like a branch in a vine that continues bearing good fruit. Continued personal growth in the fruit of the Spirit makes up the abundant life Jesus came to offer.
5. The concept of growth in experiencing the fruit of the Spirit is a better statement of the goal for ministry than helping participants reach maturity or become a better disciple.
6. The growth that counts individually and in a congregation is increases in experiencing the fruit of the Spirit, especially high levels of love and joy.
7. For those exploring the Christian faith, keep the focus on the Spirit’s power to change lives.
8. We can improve how we cultivate the soil for the Spirit’s work in us individually and as a congregation.
9. We can more clearly emphasize how the fellowship of the Holy Spirit makes Christian congregations different from social organizations.
10. Consider six practices for GROWTH in the Spirit.

Pastor Dave Luecke is a member of the Board of Directors of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

“He [Christ] died for me. He made His righteousness mine and made my sin His own; and if He made my sin His own, then I do not have it, and I am free.” - **MARTIN LUTHER**

THANK YOU TO PASTOR MIKE POZZUTO

Pastor Mike Pozzuto was elected to the LLRA Board in 2014. We are very appreciative of his years of service. He was a member of the Fundraising Committee and was an active contributor on the Board's Conference Calls. Mike chose not to be nominated for another three-year term as a Member at Large on the Board. We thank Mike for his continued interest in LLRA's ministry, even beyond being a Board member.

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

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

THANK YOU TO DICK BROWN

The LLRA Board expresses a heartfelt "thank you" to Dick Brown, who resigned from the LLRA Board on July 1, 2017. Dick had been the Board President for 15 years beginning in 1998. In 2013 Dick handed the baton to Elaine Schomaker who was elected President in the 2013 Board elections. At that time, Dick remained on the Board as the President Emeritus. Over the years, Dick's commitment to and passion for LLRA's ministry was very evident while President and as President Emeritus. Dick did all aspects of the ministry beyond the presidency and being on the LLRA Board. For many years the LLRA office was in Pleasant Hill, CA, in Dick's home where he served, also, as the Office Manager. Dick served on many LLRA teams as the weekend coordinator and on others as a general team member. In 2015, the LLRA office was moved to Butler, PA where our Outreach Director, Bill Oehlschlager resides and who took on the role of Office Manager in addition to his role as Outreach Director and working closely with LLRA's treasurer.

"As pastor of Immanuel congregation, I was thrilled with the experience and the aftermath of the Renewal weekend held in September 2014. It brought joy to my heart to see our members reflecting on their relationship with the Lord and expressing their faith in small group settings. There was a spirit of joy and unity among the 80+ individuals who participated. Members of Immanuel became more familiar with each other and learned to ask for prayer from one another. This weekend sparked a renewed enthusiasm for service to the Lord and participation in small group Bible studies. I am deeply thankful to the team of lay witnesses who gave of themselves. They did an outstanding job in leading us in renewal". - Pastor Kevin Graudin, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Easton MD

You ARE Saved by Works

You are saved by works. But NOT yours. Jesus did more than die for you. He lived for you. Salvation is not merely the forgiveness of sins. It is the gift of righteousness, received by faith. This Good News is the focus of the Scriptures. You do nothing. God works. And His works are very good. Your God works are done in response to salvation. Justification by grace through faith does not mean good works are bad, but puts them in their proper role. We live according to God's will out of thankfulness to His love.

"I watched as God brought healing and renewal to individuals and a deeper sense of cohesion to the congregation." - Pastor Bob Quaintance, Good Hope Lutheran Church, Boardman OH

MORE MARTIN LUTHER QUOTES

“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**

“True humility does not know that it is humble. If it did, it would be proud from the contemplation of so fine a virtue.” - **Martin Luther**

SCHEDULED RENEWAL EVENTS

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| September 30 | Spot the Spirit Workshop
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Sewickley, PA
The Rev. Robert Kiplinger, Interim Pastor
The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph. D., Workshop Leader |
| October 1 | Sharing Your Faith Workshop
St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Evans City, PA
The Rev. Brandon Johns, Pastor |
| October 7 | Spot the Spirit Workshop
North American Lutheran Seminary/Trinity School for Ministry
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 |

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!

You Can Read the Bible on Your Phone Because of Luther

We love & treasure the Word of God. The scriptures are our sole source for doctrine & practice. The Scriptures deliver Christ to us, & for this we rejoice. Luther desired that every person have access to the Word of God. He translated the Bible into German so that every person could read it. A result of Luther's translation was the proliferation of Bible translations, and today, the multiplicity of media through which God's Word is freely available.



Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus

Sola Scriptura. Sola Gratia. Sola Fide. Solus Christus. Latin. Ironic, isn't it? A movement that resulted in the liturgy and the Bible in our language (not Latin) is remembered by Latin phrases. By Scripture alone, by grace alone, by faith alone. Through Christ alone. Alone. Without your help. Without human tradition. Without anyone's assistance God acts alone through Jesus. Scripture. Given by God.. Through which we receive Christ. Through Christ alone. God gives us all these gifts because of Jesus' death and resurrection. All good gifts come from God and benefit all those who believe. Through Christ alone.

MORE MARTIN LUTHER QUOTES

"This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified." - **Martin Luther**

"Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me. Amen!" - **MARTIN LUTHER**

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Dan Klueg - for the Lord's complete recovery of his back and release of pain. For the Lord's peace, comfort and joy in his life. That the Lord would enable him to be active in work again.
- For Kathie Klueg - for the Lord's healing for her leg.
- For healing for Dick and Bev Brown.
- For the Lord's peace & comfort for Lori Sardiga at this time as she deals with parents' medical issues. His peace for her and all her family.
- For the Lord's blessings on the Renewal Weekend at Faith Lutheran Church Meadow Vista CA October 20-22. May He be present in all parts of the weekend. May He be in all the hearts of everyone attending and the team of the Renewal Weekend.
- 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!

Oh, God, my Father, thank You for Your mercies – innumerable, measureless, fathomless... Thank You! Be present with me now on each step of the LLRA journey. Grow me up in my inner being to receive & share abroad more & more of Your love. Let me be Your hands & face & words to all I meet. Set me free to serve You – free from anxiety, fear, self-pity, self-hatred, cynicism or skepticism. Free me from every crippling sin & any darkness of unbelief, Lord Jesus Christ, anoint my life & my spiritual community with deep faith & reckless abandonment to Your enduring goodness. Give us truly listening hearts, that we may hear Your Word & courageously act upon it, to the praise of Your Name & joy of Your heart. I ask this in the name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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.