

THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America
Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971
JANUARY, 2018

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Many Joyful Greetings to all of you and your families, in hopes that you have entered 2018 with enthusiasm and anticipation, that God's presence will be prominent in your lives.

As the New Year begins, all of us continue on our life journey. We have a wonderful opportunity. We have had the privilege and the blessing to have the Bible guide us along. No matter at what time of life we are in, God's saving action continues. As we read our Bibles, we are invited to read the story how God intends to renew our lives and the life of the whole world. It is truly God calling us to be familiar with His word and to engage in it. Two of my familiar verses, that are so reassuring, are the first two verses of Psalm 121:

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains- where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. – NIV version*

I never want to lose sight of what God has done for us through the ages and to remember as the Bible records it, that He was with His people through all their hurts, failures and disappointments, and always kept calling His people back to him.

That is what I hope this New Year will bring - many of God's people returning to Him. In the Book of Jeremiah, it is written – "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*" – *Jeremiah 29:13 –NIV version*

In Lutheran Lay Renewal of America, we look to 2018 with anticipation and optimism. There is an opportunity to reach more of the states between the East and West Coasts. Our Outreach Director, Bill Oehlschlager, plans to explore more ways to expand the ministry and have more opportunities available to more congregations.

Again, welcome to 2018. May it be a year of many blessings, some which we can't even imagine. I always want all of you to know how much we appreciate your support of our ministry, whether financially or prayerfully; both are very powerful and LLRA appreciates your support tremendously.

Please pray for our nation and the world.

Elaine Schomaker, President
Lutheran Lay Renewal of America

THOUGHTS ON EPIPHANY

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." – Matthew 2:1,2

“The conduct of the wise men is a striking example of faith. They believed in Christ when they had never seen Him - but that was not all. They believed in Him when the Scribes and Pharisees were unbelieving - but that again was not all. They believed in Him when they saw Him a little infant on Mary's knee, and worshiped Him as a king. This was the crowning point of their faith. They saw no miracles to convince them. They heard no teaching to persuade them. They saw no signs of divinity and greatness to overawe them. They saw nothing but a newborn infant, helpless and weak, and needing a mother's care like any one of ourselves. And yet when they saw that infant, they believed that they saw the divine Savior of the world. 'They fell down and worshiped Him.'” - *John R. W. Stott*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“If we only love those who love us, or are attractive to us, this is more an expression of self-interest than of love, and our kindness to them will cease as soon as it conflicts with our self-interest. In the same way, if we only love God when he blesses us and gives us good things, this is more an expression of self-love than genuine love for God. If we approach God with a “mercenary spirit,” by only serving him because we expect some payout, we are idolaters as far as Luther is concerned. We have made our fear of punishment or desire for reward our ultimate concern instead of God and are trying to use him as an idol to serve our desires.” – *Michael A. Lockwood, The Unholy Trinity – Martin Luther Against the Idol of Me, Myself and I*

“One trend a number of scholars have observed in contemporary American society is a rise in narcissistic behaviors and attitudes. People on average have become more focused on the pursuit of their desires and less constrained by moral concerns or by loyalty to other people. A generation ago, Philip Rieff spoke about the rise of “therapeutic man,” who lives for bread and circuses, and for his own subjective wellbeing. He predicted in 1966 that religion would not disappear in the future but would be pressed into the service of therapeutic man, who desires to be pleased rather than saved. Religion would therefore not focus on right doctrine but on doctrines that amount to permission for people to live as they please.” – *Michael A. Lockwood, The Unholy Trinity – Martin Luther Against the Idol of Me, Myself and I*

“Conceding the disconcerting effects of sola contrition George Yule goes on to examine the fact "that the way of salvation was presented in an extremely legalistic and Pelagian way. All realized man sinned; all realized that grace was necessary to remedy this. But in this legalistic, impersonal and forensic schema the view became dominant that God's forgiveness is conditional on our true repentance of which our contrition is an essential ingredient. It was fully realized that grace was necessary and the relationship of grace to man's repentance was expressed in a variety of ways but almost always there was left a residue of human effort so that contrition itself became 'our work' and the nagging doubt remained - and this as we shall see was Luther's problem - 'was I contrite enough'. This was an attitude characterized later by Calvin as 'legal repentance' (The Institutes, III-iii-1 to 4). The descriptive 'ifs' of the New Testament had become legal prescriptive 'ifs' so that it was thought that God's forgiveness was dependent upon our repentance. But the grace of God is unconditional, and because of this it calls forth unconditional obligations of gratitude. These, however, are never conditions for the grace of God. God's forgiveness is always prior to man's repentance and indeed makes it possible, as Augustine so well knew. Making conditions for repentance, especially when coupled with a legalistic view of sin and an impersonal view of grace, make Pelagianism almost inevitable.” – *Roger Salter*

"Many Protestants assume that when Luther said justification by faith alone he meant that we are saved not by our works but by our existential decision of faith. But this, as Cranmer remarked, makes faith into a work, and it would have been for Luther just another type of Pelagianism (Homily on Justification, Miscellaneous Writings, Parker Society). 'Faith', he wrote, 'is something done to us rather than by us for it changes our hearts and minds. The essential point of Christian faith is its object Jesus Christ. Without its object all that remains of faith is 'merely froth and uncertain opinion or dreams . . . Even if I am feeble in faith I still have the same treasure and the same Christ as others'. The function of faith was to point away from one's self and one's works to Christ only, and hence Luther's preference for *fiducia* rather than *assensus*, for it was a word implying allegiance (Yule, page 15).

Luther's primary role was to set captives to falsehood and fear gloriously free. He wished to join the hearts, minds, and lives of as many as possible to the outreaching compassion of Christ. None excel Luther in this crucial ministry of mercy." - *The Rev. Roger Salter is an ordained Church of England minister where he had parishes in the dioceses of Bristol and Portsmouth before coming to Birmingham, Alabama to serve as Rector of St. Matthew's Anglican Church.*

"If God were willing to sell His grace, we would accept it more quickly and gladly than when He offers it for nothing." — *Martin Luther*

"Jesus provoked only three responses when he walked the earth: hatred, fear, or adoration. And yet many who profess to be Christians today respond only with mild approval at best. Why is that, and what can we do to awaken the world - and ourselves - to the uniqueness of Christ?" - *Stefan Gustavsson*

"At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scripture from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God." - *From Luther's Works, Volume 34*

God's name and glory. "If God desires every knee to bow to Jesus and every tongue to confess him, so should we. We should be 'jealous' (as Scripture sometimes puts it) for the honour of his name -- troubled when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed, and all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given the honour and glory which are due to it. The highest of all missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God) but rather zeal -- burning and passionate zeal -- for the glory of Jesus Christ. Some evangelism, to be sure, is no better than a thinly disguised form of imperialism, whenever our real ambition is for the honour of our nation, church, organization, or ourselves. Only one imperialism is Christian, however, and that is concern for His Imperial Majesty Jesus Christ, and for the glory of his empire or kingdom. The earliest Christians, John tells us, went out 'for the sake of the Name' (3 Jn. 7). He does not even specify to which name he is referring. But we know. And Paul tells us. It is the incomparable name of Jesus. Before this supreme goal of the Christian mission, all unworthy motives wither and die." - *John R. W. Stott*

SCHEDULED LUTHERAN LAY RENEWAL EVENTS

January 20, 2018	Holy Cross Lutheran Church Spiritual Transformation Retreat Nazareth, PA
January 21, 2018	Holy Cross Lutheran Church Sharing Your Faith Workshop Nazareth, PA

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

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

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Kathy Klueg’s father, for the Lord’s healing & strength
- For the Lord’s healing for Dan Klueg’s back, release of pain, peace, comfort & joy that he may be able to return to work.
- For the Lord’s healing for Kathy Klueg’s leg.
- For healing for Dick and Bev Brown.
- For the Lord’s peace & comfort for Lori Sardiga and all her family as they deal with her mother’s and her husband’s parents deaths all in the last five months.
- 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 always needed.
- For healing for Elaine Schomaker