

THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

*The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America
Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971*

JULY, 2019

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SUMMER RENEWAL CONFERENCE

Our annual Summer Renewal Conference was held on Saturday, June 22 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Saxonburg, PA. Our Executive Director led two sessions: 7 Lessons for Living the Spiritual Life and 10 Stops on the Road to Spiritual Transformation. Four small group discussion periods were interspersed within the teaching sessions. Some comments from attendees are below:

"Jesus Christ told those who would follow Him to 'consider the cost' [Luke 14: 28]. This conference was an invitation and exhortation to move from complacency to commitment - from nominal Christianity to authentic discipleship. The break out groups were also a highlight of this conference." - Matthew Kail, Pastor, Muddy Creek and Unionville EPC Churches.

"I am certain that one or more of the seven lessons shared on Saturday probably impacted the participants in some excellent and unexpected way. Each was obviously refined from time and experience gained in the crucible of living the Christian life. The final item of gratitude was well placed as it perfectly wraps up the list as our thanksgiving to God for His continuous care and faithfulness." - Dick Smith, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Saxonburg, PA

The conference is held in a different church every year. If your congregation would be interested in hosting this event in 2020, please contact our national office.

BOARD ELECTION

Do you have a heart for the renewal of the church? Do you have ideas for new ways to help individuals and congregations grow into a deeper spirituality? Do you have spiritual gifts that you feel called to use in this ministry? This is perhaps the most exciting time in the 48-year history of Lutheran Lay Renewal, as over the past year we have expanded this ministry with great success into Uganda. What does the Lord have planned next for us? We expect to have another exciting announcement next January!

The Board of Directors of Lutheran Lay Renewal will be meeting by conference call on August 18. One of the important items on the agenda is the election of new board members, who may be lay people or pastors. If you or someone you know would be willing to serve on our board, please contact our national office. You are welcome to nominate yourself or someone you know, with their permission of course. Our board meets about four times per year and normally by conference call, so traveling to board meetings is not necessary.

"Proclaim the truth and do not be silent through fear. Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." — St. Catherine of Siena

RENEWAL WEEKEND IN NALUKERO, UGANDA

“I am happy to report that Lutheran Lay Renewal in the Eastern Deanery is continuing to take root in the congregations, as many are also asking to be visited and get enriched with the information about Christ through the Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend events. One event had just got finished taking place at Itakaibolu Lutheran Church and in the photos below we were at Nalukero Lutheran Church on 25 and 26 May, 2019. This is a church that has just completed only two years. The Christians embraced the event as they attended and shared Christian stories, especially how the Lord has enabled them to endure hardships as they are surrounded by Muslims.

The evangelist who attended the January conference (at the Lutheran Theological College in Magamaga) reported that he had taught what he and his colleague learned. He said they started an evangelism team after the Lutheran Lay Renewal workshop in Magamaga, which has enabled them to reach a number of people in the community. Mr. Kabakubya George also shared with me of how he needs more theological training so that he can teach well in his community.

The Chairman of the congregation shared how the congregation is lacking land for the congregation and that there was land on sale but they lacked funds. However, he said the congregation could not prioritize any things before they have land where they would build a church. The chairman said that the land on sale was at 5,000,000 Ugandan Shillings (US \$1,350.00). He also said that the number of people joining the Lutheran Church was increasing at all times and the other challenge was lack of at least a temporary structure made of tines, mud and wood.

The congregation for the two days of the event were disturbed by rain, thanks be to God that on Sunday at midday it got clear and the service started. The head of laity in Eastern Deanery, Engineer Nandubu Fredrick Paul, graced the event by attending the event on the last day and he encouraged the members to stand firm in faith as they wait on the Lord’s best time to give them land and all that they needed.

I am grateful for the blessings the Lord is always bestowing upon the church, especially with committed men in service like Vicar Emmanuel Nandhubu (below) who travels a long distance of 45 kilometers riding a bicycle.”



Vicar Emmanuel Nandhubu



Rev. Peter Maganda leading Sunday worship

“To the Executive Director of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America, I would like also to inform you that I received a request from the Dean of Mid-Western Deanery, Rev Kaija Raymond, asking that we extend the program to his people, having realized its importance. I therefore pray that you consider having a conference

next year in January, 2020. Thanks a lot for your prayers, may God bless you all. Amen.” - Rev. Peter M. Maganda, Dean, Eastern District

RENEWAL WEEKEND IN ITAKAIBOLU, UGANDA

“Greetings to you all friends in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. I am happy to report that Itakaibolu Lutheran Church organized a Renewal Weekend program May 11 and 12. According to the report I got from Vicar Kyaterekera Moses, the event started with praise and worship songs composed by the congregation choir. Mr. Dheyongera Patrick and Florence Mpetta from Nakavule Lutheran Church were invited to be part of the facilitators of the event. Via phone Vicar Moses expressed a concern that the congregation still needed another Renewal Weekend to be organized, as it would help in strengthening the church which he said was struggling to have worship leaders to be added to him.

Moses also reported that after worship on 12th May the congregation visited a family of the former church leader, who had stopped attending the church; they prayed for him and he promised to restart attending worship services.”

Thanks and God’s Blessings.

Rev. Peter Maganda
Dean, Eastern Deanery LCU

REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF UGANDA

The Lord is working in wonderful ways in the Lutheran Church of Uganda. The LCU has planted over 140 new congregations in the last 25 years and is experiencing amazing growth, despite a serious lack of financial resources. In January our Executive Director had the privilege of attending the first Sunday worship service at Bukabooli Lutheran Church. Worship was held outside on wooden benches, under the shade of a jackfruit tree, as the congregation has no land or building – or the funds to pay for either. Now this new congregation has the opportunity to purchase a plot of land for only \$3,510.00. Would you or your congregation be willing to help?

In addition, as you read on page 2, Nalukero Lutheran Church needs land for their congregation and could buy a plot for \$1,350.00, if only they had the funds. Keep in mind that Uganda is one of the 25 poorest countries in the world and people in rural villages have very little money even to live on.

Donations to help these two congregations purchase land may be sent to Lutheran Lay Renewal (a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit ministry) and are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. If you or your congregation would prefer to send a donation directly to the Lutheran Church of Uganda for this purpose, please contact our national office for wire transfer information. We hope to be able to send the funds very soon.

MARTIN LUTHER ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

“A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. To this end he brings his body into subjection that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others.”

IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND US

At their first church convention the earliest disciples made a policy decision. They announced it in a letter to the rest of the church with this phrase: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us that . . .”

Have you ever seen or heard of a church today that announces a decision with that phrase: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us that . . .” I haven’t. I suspect you haven’t either.

Why not?

I think traditional Protestant churches today no longer think of the Third Person of the Trinity as a vital part of our spiritual life. Yes, he was important in Bible times. But we don’t expect much from him today.

Thoroughly trained in traditional Lutheran church culture, I recall learning lots of Bible stories and digging ever deeper into church teachings. But I also retain the impression we were basically on our own to apply this knowledge in daily living. Duty was ever before us, and motivation was by guilt. Salvation was for the next life. There we would have direct encounters with God.

Only in recent decades have I fully appreciated Jesus’ explanation that he has come so that the sheep may have life abundantly overflowing *now in this life*. Figuring out what that means has been especially difficult for someone with my background. Thank God the Spirit has an easier time producing his fruit with other believers who learned to expect him.

I don’t remember church leaders ever expecting dramatic interventions. Fund raising goals were set rationally (2-3 times annual giving), but campaigns relied on the techniques of group dynamics. We prayed for healings, but no one really expected a supernatural miracle, because that does not happen anymore.

Traditional rational mainline churches have grown and served God well over the centuries with barely a passing reference to the Third Person of the Trinity, who nonetheless had been productive in the background. But most of those traditional mainline church bodies seem to be withering in the 21st century. Where the Gospel is spreading now is among churches that emphasize direct encounters with God.

About fifteen years ago the church I serve had to decide how much debt to take on for a building project. How much more growth could we expect? We all recognized that borrowing for the full project was not prudent. After many discussions, a compromise emerged to build just the shell of a second wing and finish it later when more dollars were available. The time came for a vote. The tension was high. To everyone’s surprise and relief the vote was unanimous to take on \$2 million in additional debt. I think everyone in that room realized something special had happened. But, unfortunately, we had no name for it.

The Holy Spirit was truly present in a special way. If a photo had been made of that moment, I would photoshop in the image of a dove over our heads. We could have (and should have) announced to the congregation for their approval that, “It seems good to the Holy Spirit and this board that we enter into contracts for 3.5 million dollars of construction.”

Was the Holy Spirit really there hovering over our heads? In future columns I will share what to look for to be sure. In this case we can be confident because the results were so good. We hit our fund-raising goal. We did finish the shell over the next ten years and the building is packed with activity. Most basic is that it did build up our fellowship without conflict.

The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph.D., LLR Board Member

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” – Acts 9:31

SCHEDULED EVENTS

July 20-21	Renewal Weekend Bukabooli Lutheran Church Bukabooli, Uganda The Rev. Emmanuel Bwaana, Pastor
August 7-8	Renewal Weekend Ikumbya Lutheran Church Ikumbya, Uganda
August 17	Men's Retreat Oakhurst Lutheran Church Oakhurst, CA The Rev. Jason Johnsen, Pastor
August 18	Sharing Your Faith Workshop Sierra Lutheran Church Auberry, CA
August 24	Spiritual Transformation Retreat Emanuel Lutheran Church Modesto, CA The Rev. Lynette Crase, Pastor
September 7-8	Renewal Weekend Kainogoga Lutheran Church Kainogoga, Uganda
September 8	Sharing Your Faith Workshop Annapolis Evangelical Lutheran Church Edgewater, MD The Rev. Mark Metze, Pastor
September 14	Spiritual Transformation Retreat St. Luke's Lutheran Church Monroe, NC The Rev. Christopher Metze, Pastor
September 21	Spiritual Transformation Retreat Redeemer Lutheran Church Albuquerque, NM The Rev. John Heffelfinger, Pastor

More events are in the planning stages so check our web site often, where the calendar is always up to date.

“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.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Healing for Dan and Kathie Klueg, and Kathie's father
- Healing for Dick and Bev Brown

- Healing for Elaine Schomaker
 - For the Lord's protection over all police officers, firefighters and all men and women in our armed forces
 - For the Lord's blessings on our ministry in Uganda and on the Lutheran Church of Uganda
 - For wisdom and guidance for the LLRA Board of Directors, as we seek to grow and expand this ministry
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Battered and Bruised

I was living life to its fullest
 Working full time providing for my family
 Friends and associates who liked me
 Healthy and thinking I was wise
 All was good so I thought that's what the world told me.

Oh how wrong we both were
 I was battered and bruised
 Sinking into depths of despair not even realizing it
 Thank you Lord for saving me from a life that could end.

Now the world looks at me feeling sorry for me
 Saying I am battered and bruised
 Not able to work and in constant pain
 But what they do not know is I have the Joy of our Lord
 And freedom in our Lord
 I am no longer battered and bruised
 I still live life to its fullest more full than ever before.

Thank you Lord for saving me and giving me a live eternal
 You and only you can take away our bruises and keep us from despair.
 Thank you Jesus!

Love you Lord! Love You Lord! Love You Lord!
 No longer battered and bruised you have saved me Lord.

Dan Klueg, LLR Board Member

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.

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!

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