

# **THE VOICE OF RENEWAL**

*The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America*  
*Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971*  
**NOVEMBER, 2019**

## **LLRA Board of Directors**

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**The Rev. David Luecke, Ph. D.**

## **ANNAPOLIS EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND**



On Sunday, September 8 Annapolis Evangelical Lutheran Church hosted our Sharing Your Faith workshop. About 50 people attended, from teens to octogenarians. Pastor Mark Metze writes: "I want to thank you for not only sharing your personal testimony with us, but also your deep knowledge of the Christian faith. Annapolis Lutheran is striving to be discipleship oriented and your presentation will help to launch that mind set. Please accept the enclosed donation as a token of our deep appreciation for your ministry."





## LUTHERAN CHURCH OF UGANDA PARTNERS CONFERENCE

Our Savior Lutheran Church, McKinney, TX hosted the bi-annual Lutheran Church of Uganda Partners Conference on September 11 and 12 and Lutheran Lay Renewal was invited to attend. Many representatives from American partner ministries were present, as well as five representatives from the Lutheran Church of Uganda, including Bishop Charles Bameka. It was a good opportunity to meet many people from a variety of ministries, all of whom are committed to serving and supporting the LCU and the people of Uganda.



(L to R) The Rev. Tim Radkey, Our Savior Lutheran Church, McKinney, TX, The Rev. Raymond Kaija, Dean of the Midwestern Deanery, LCU, Bill Oehlschlager, LLR, The Rev. Enoch Macben, President, Lutheran Theological College, Uganda, Bishop Charles Bameka, Fred Magezi, Head of Laity, LCU, The Rev. James Okello Odoo, LCU.





## ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA



Pastor Christopher Metze with some of the parishioners of St. Luke's who attended the retreat.

On Saturday, September 14 St. Luke's hosted our Spiritual Transformation retreat. Pastor Christopher Metze writes: "St. Luke's Lutheran Church was delighted to host Bill Oehlschlager from Lutheran Lay Renewal. Bill is friendly and energetic. His presentation was spirited, informative, thought-provoking and most certainly edifying for all participants. I wholeheartedly recommend Lutheran Lay Renewal for any Lutheran congregation eager for spiritual renewal and faith formation."

### FRED MAGEZI VISITS PITTSBURGH AND LLR

Fred Magezi, Head of Laity, Vice Chair of the National Synod Board of Trustees and Education Coordinator for the Lutheran Church of Uganda, visited the Pittsburgh area in October. On October 5 Fred gave a presentation on the work of the LCU to the youth group at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Evans City. Earlier in the year the youth of St. Peter's had donated funds to purchase Lutheran Study Bibles for first year students at the Lutheran Theological College in Uganda. Fred also gave a presentation and preached at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Butler, PA on October 6. While here Fred also was given a tour of Pittsburgh by our Executive Director.



At St. Peter's, Evans City, PA with Heidi Beahm (L), Pastor Brandon Johns (R) and some of the youth group.





(L to R) Bill Oehlschlager, LLR Board Member Judy Moser and Fred Magezi

### **MID NORTHEAST MISSION DISTRICT CONVOCATION**

On Saturday, October 12, LLR board member Judy Moser and Executive Director Bill Oehlschlager represented LLR at the annual convocation of the Mid Northeast Mission District of the NALC, held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Sarver, PA. Our display table gave us the opportunity to speak with many pastors and delegates about LLR and there was a lot of interest in what we have to offer. Bill also was invited to speak to the convocation about the ministry of LLR and our work in Uganda. The convocation was the site of newly elected NALC Bishop Daniel Selbo's first official visit.



(L-R) Bill Oehlschlager, Judy Moser and Bishop Daniel Selbo



## **LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLES DONATED TO THE SEMINARY IN UGANDA**



First year students at the seminary receiving their Lutheran Study Bibles

Many thanks to the youth group at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Evans City, PA, the congregation of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Butler, PA and those individuals who donated funds to LLR for the purchase of Lutheran Study Bibles for the incoming first year students at the Lutheran Theological College in Magamaga, Uganda. The LSB is a wonderful resource that these future pastors will utilize for the rest of their lives.

## **JANUARY MISSION TO UGANDA**

Bishop Charles Bameka has requested that LLR lead a renewal conference in the LCU's Far Eastern Deanery in January. This deanery is served by only one ordained pastor, Rev. Nicholas Bwire, so there is a great need to raise up and train spiritual leaders from among the laity there. Plans are just starting to be made but LLR will need financial support in order for this mission to take place.

## **REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Lutheran Lay Renewal has been growing in many ways in recent years, yet our financial support base has not been growing and we are not able to do as much ministry as we are being asked to do, especially overseas. There is a lot more we could be doing to assist the Lutheran Church of Uganda but some requests to lead renewal conferences are being pushed back a year or more due to our lack of funding. There are three deaneries in Uganda that would like us to lead renewal conferences right now but we do not yet have the funds to lead even one. In addition, we have received requests from Lutheran pastors in Kenya and India, to visit congregations, lead renewal conferences, train lay people, lead revivals, etc., which we have to keep turning down due to a lack of financial resources.

While church attendance and Christian belief are on the decline in North America and Europe, Christianity is experiencing explosive growth in Africa and Asia. Despite the fact that many of these Christians are living in poverty, they are rich in faith and in the joy of the Lord. They are hungry for the Word of God and for spiritual growth. They are turning to us for assistance and it is heartbreaking when we have to say no, we're sorry but we just don't have the funds to help right now.

Please help with a year-end gift to LLR, which is tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

## ENCOURAGED BY EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EMPOWERING PRESENCE

The charismatic movement of the 1960s through 80s touched many congregations in mainline denominations. So did conflict, as traditional pastors and church members encountered something not in our Reformation traditions—experiences of speaking in tongues, as practiced in Paul's time. Considered a gift and blessing, this experience is expected for membership in Pentecostal churches.

I was not part of that movement, nor have I ever spoken in tongues. The charismatic movement peaked about forty-five years ago, but I risk mentioning those divisive times to make one simple point. Those speaking or praying in a strange language were experiencing God's empowering presence, and that is very exciting. "God's empowering presence" sums up the over-arching theme biblical scholar Gordon Fee found in his study of Paul's references to the Spirit in his letters.

By now many mainline churches have new appreciation for Paul's explanation of the many spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. Almost all are giftings by the Spirit for doing ministries that would be welcome in any congregation today. When you learn to spot those giftings at work among people in your congregation, you can be encouraged by what you observe.

American mainline churches are coming out of a late 20th-century movement that advocated viewing congregations as social organizations that could be improved by better management techniques. I contributed to that with a book on *Pastoral Administration: Integrating Ministry and Management*. Those new perspectives did not slow down the decline. In fact, that mentality probably contributed to it.

The challenge now, however, is to encourage each other by looking for evidence of how congregations are different from other community social organizations. Look for reflections of the Spirit's empowering presence at work among believers around you.

Start with yourself and any special times when you gained new faith insights or found service to others to be especially rewarding. Look for stories like experiencing the special joy of taking communion to a home-bound church member. Or perhaps it is a small awakening to a new faith insight that increases your trust in God. Look for evidence that something has changed for the better in the motivation or outlook of a participant or a group that has been exposed to the Spirit through God's word.

But I add another expectation. Insights from psychology and sociology can explain a lot of what happens in traditional church life. When and where the Spirit is at work, the lives of believers change for the better in what they do and how they feel about their relation to God. Be affirmed by the "extra" the Spirit brings to church people, like participating by the hundreds in an organized service project.

The one whose life has changed in small or big ways has a story worth sharing. Many may be reluctant to do so, assuming what happened is too personal or not important. But find some part of your God-moment to share with others, not for your sake but for theirs. The Spirit who moved in you can do that for others, too. I dream of traditional congregations where such mutual God-oriented conversation and encouragement happen routinely. It already does so in many congregations more oriented to the Spirit in their midst. Instead of social small talk after worship, they actually talk about what God is doing in their lives and what they are praying for.

It can become so in traditional churches. Church leaders first need to decide they want to look for evidence of the Spirit alive and working in their midst. Then comes purposeful effort to solve issues of arranging time and place for such sharing. Website technology makes that easier. That's why I have put a lot of time and effort into developing an online community that congregations can use to make such sharing easier and more compelling. It's called **Virtual Church Fellowship** and will be launched very soon! Stay tuned!

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

## A THANKFUL HEART THIS THANKSGIVING

We had a dear friend pass away a couple of weeks ago. Her husband called us two days after her death. We had been friends for many years, enjoying fellowship with each other, and saw our children grow up together when we attended the same church while both families were in the Bay area years ago. Our children were in the same Youth group. At that time, parents were very involved and supportive of the kids, and were chaperons on the Youth ski trips and other outings.

Now, both of our families see our children with their own nuclear families. Even though the children have their own busy lives, the friendship has remained within the family system. Even though we haven't been able to gather, as families, on a regular basis with our friends, my husband and I have maintained the camaraderie between our, now, deceased friend and her husband.

What I remember most about my friend was her laughter and her genuine and loving interest in her children and grandchildren. At times, we would laugh until our stomachs hurt. There are no words that can convey the sense of loss of such a friendship. We will miss her so much and plan to attend the Celebration of Life service that will be held for her two days after Thanksgiving.

This Thanksgiving will have an additional meaning to it -the memory of a dear friend with whom there will be no more laughter and no more hugs. But, I'm sure she is laughing with and getting hugs from the angels. She is home!

I write as a thankful heart for the friendship my husband and I had with our friend and her husband. It brings to mind the words of Johann Cruger's hymn, *Nun Danket Alle Gott*

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,  
Who, from our mother's arms, hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

Elaine Schomaker, President Emeritus

Excerpts from *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young – Page 345

THIS IS THE DAY THAT I HAVE MADE! As you rejoice in this day of life, it will yield up to you precious gifts and beneficial training. Walk with Me along the high road of thanksgiving, and you will find all the delights I have made ready for you.

To protect your thankfulness, you must remember that you reside in a fallen world, where blessings and sorrows intermingle freely. A constant focus on adversity defeats many Christians. They walk through a day that is brimming with beauty and brightness, seeing only the grayness of their thoughts. Neglecting the practice of giving thanks has darkened their minds. How precious are My children who remember to thank Me at all times. They can walk through darkest days with Joy in their hearts because they know that the Light of My Presence is still shining on them. *Rejoice in this day that I have made*, for I am your steadfast Companion.

## SCHEDULED EVENTS

November 2-3	Renewal Weekend Bugono Lutheran Church Bugono, Uganda The Rev. Sossy Balise, Pastor
November 16	Spot the Spirit Workshop Our Savior's Lutheran Church Ambridge, PA The Rev. Jill McGregor, Pastor The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph. D., Workshop Leader

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.**

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## PRAYER REQUESTS

- Healing for Dan and Kathie Klueg, and Kathie's father
  - Comfort, peace and healing for Dick 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
  - For the financial resources that are needed for our ministry in the U.S. and Uganda
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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.*

*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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