

# **THE VOICE OF RENEWAL**

***The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America***  
***Serving all Lutheran churches since 1971***  
**JANUARY, 2020**

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## **JOIN US IN ISRAEL IN 2021!**

Our Executive Director, Bill Oehlschlager, his wife Joanne and LLR Vice President Lou McKibben just returned from a ten-day familiarization tour of Israel with 34 Lutheran pastors, District Presidents and their spouses. What a fantastic experience it was!

We are now beginning to plan our own ten-day tour of Israel for next January. We hope to have the tour planned by February 1, so watch for more information in our March newsletter - or call our office in February for a brochure and more details.



**The Garden of Gethsemane, looking up to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem**





**Traditional site of the birth of Jesus, in the cave under the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem**



**Synagogue in Capernaum, on the North shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum became the home base for Jesus' ministry in the Galilee region and he would have spoken in this synagogue. "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." – Matthew 4:23**

**More photos on page 5.**

## NEWS FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF UGANDA

“Greetings from the Lutheran Church of Uganda. I am happy to report the progress of the LLR programs in our Deanery. On 2nd November, 2019, I delegated Rev. Erifazi Buluuba to organize a Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend event at Bugono Community. The event was organized at the home of Rev. Sossy Balise.

According to the report from Rev. Erifazi, the event was well attended, mostly by women of the congregation. The members on 1st day were few because the weather was not good. However, they first had praise and worship songs followed by a word of prayer led by Rev. Balise.

On that day Revs. Buluuba and Balise asked the members to share their faith with one another. In so doing members discussed personal experiences in church, family problems, marriage problems and how they had gone through them. They also prayed for one another after the discussion.

They had a worship service at the same place on Sunday led by Rev. Buluuba alone, as Rev. Sossy had fallen sick. Erifazi reported that the number that attended was small but they enjoyed the event. The children were also part of the workshop and sang choruses during the event.

Some of the challenges they reported were lack of a church structure, though they have the land. The church also reported lack of worship materials in their language of Lusoga.

Thanks be to God for Buluuba, who accepted to work with Sossy in conducting the event. They were asked by the congregation to have another LLR Weekend in March as the first was not well attended.

We shall have an event at Bulange Lutheran Church of Uganda in Namutumba district on 8th and 9th February; this is a new station led by a worship leader called Eriot Kiirya. Another weekend will be held on 14-15 March at Kyabazaala Lutheran Church, led Rev. Buluuba Erifazi.” – The Rev. Peter Maganda, Dean, Eastern District

## SPRING MISSION TO UGANDA

Bishop Charles Bameka requested that LLR lead a three-day 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. About 65 people, including women’s leaders, youth leaders, congregational heads of laity, and school teachers of Nalwire Lutheran primary school are expected to attend. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to raise all of the approximately \$7,000 needed to pay for all of the expenses related to this mission, mostly housing and food for all of the attendees. As a result, the conference has been postponed until April or May.

The financial needs of the Lutheran Church of Uganda are great; funds are needed to purchase land, to build schools and church structures, to train seminarians, to pay Lutheran school teachers and other church workers, in addition to all of the other obvious needs in one of the 25 poorest countries in the world. But at the LCU Partners Conference in McKinney, Texas last September, we learned that the number one priority is raising up spiritual leaders for the church. It all starts with spiritual leadership. Unless the LCU can raise up spiritual leaders, the other goals will not be met. This is why our ministry in Uganda is so important, because that’s what’s happening at our renewal conferences and renewal weekends. *Please help us serve the LCU this spring with a donation that will help raise up people to become spiritual leaders in the Lutheran Church of Uganda!*

*“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” – Galatians 6:9*

## **DID YOU HAVE ANY PRIMARY EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRIT OVER THE HOLIDAYS?**

When you celebrated the Christ child and started the New Year, did you have any primary experiences of the Spirit at work in your life? Did you see the Spirit touching someone else's life? The Holy Spirit is God at work touching hearts and then moving people into action. The Spirit's hallmark is stirring up and increasing God-centered love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and such fruit.

Secondary Christian experiences are symbols that can cause us to remember what God did in the past, like sending his Son to be born as a baby in Bethlehem. The symbols for that past action are rich in the Christian tradition.

Here is the question about possible primary experiences over Christmas and New Year. Did you find yourself growing in commitment to a higher level of Christ-centered living? Was your sense of confidence in your relationship with God greater than last year? Are you committing yourself to some new actions in devotions and fellowship to make yourself more available to the Spirit's work?

In family relationships, did you find yourself more forgiving of those who caused you pain in the past? Did you experience more motivation to reach out to others, perhaps with gifts, to express God's love for them? Did you have encounters with others that raised your appreciation for a fellowship of believers? Were you inclined to reach out to other believers to encourage them in their walk?

Those are questions for you personally. Now ask yourself whether you saw the Spirit move others in spiritual directions new to them?

Mainline Christians are not used to answering such questions. Other Christians around us are better trained to look for the Spirit in action here and now. Some have perhaps been given a special prayer language. Many are used to telling stories of past encounters with the Spirit in their life or that of others. An overarching term for believers sensitive to the Spirit is Pentecostals, who feature the Spirit's work on the first Pentecost. Most of the growth of Christianity around the world is in Pentecostal expressions.

Instead of looking for the Spirit, we mainline Protestants are inclined to stay focused on Christ the Son born in the stable. But that man Jesus himself tells us that he will send his Spirit to be with us today. We have the memory of the Son's redeeming work. We also have his promise to not leave us as orphans living just with those memories. He promised to send his Spirit of Truth to teach us now how to live more like Christ.

John Shea is a popular theologian and storyteller. He highlights trigger events that point us to past experiences of God. Call those traditions. We have centuries of Christian traditions and you probably have years of family traditions.

I hope those traditions worked well for you in recent weeks. But Shea warns us that memories, symbols and other secondary experiences are not enough to keep faith and a church healthy as it faces the future. Memory needs to be reinforced and refreshed with evidence of the Spirit at work in lives today.

Here again, is the lead question a week after the holidays. Did you have any primary experiences of the Spirit working in your life or recognize him in the life of others? What you need to look for is not just heightened feelings but Spirit-produced fruit in the context of God's love working and Christ's grace healing.

If you have such stories, either this year or in the past, share them. They are basic to the mutual conversation and encouragement so important in Christian fellowship.

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





**Our group on the Mount of Beatitudes, overlooking the Sea of Galilee. “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.” – Matthew 5:1-2**



**Traditional site of Jesus’ crucifixion, inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.**

## SCHEDULED EVENTS

January 19	Sharing Your Faith Workshop Christ Our Savior's Lutheran Parish Ambridge, PA The Rev. Jill McGregor, Pastor
February 8-9	Renewal Weekend Bulange Lutheran Church Nanutumba District, Uganda Eriot Kiirya, Lay Worship Leader
March 14-15	Renewal Weekend Kyabazaala Lutheran Church Mukono District, Uganda The Rev. Buluuba Erifazi, 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.**

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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!*

**Lutheran Lay Renewal of America  
209 Thornwood Drive  
Butler, PA 16001  
724-287-5151  
LLRAJ316@gmail.com  
www.lutheranrenewal.com**