

# THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

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

## LLRA Board of Directors

**Fred Schneider, President**  
**Lou McKibben, Vice President**  
**Judy Moser, Secretary**  
**Karen Ferrari, Treasurer**

**Bill Oehlschlager, Executive Director**  
**Elaine Schomaker, President Emeritus**  
**The Rev. David Luecke, Ph. D.**

## **MISSION TO THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF UGANDA**

Our Executive Director, Bill Oehlschlager, will be heading back to Uganda in April. He has been invited to preach on Easter at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Magamaga, where the first Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend in Uganda was held in 2018. In addition, he will be leading another Renewal Conference, April 14-16, at the Lutheran Theological College, for about 80 pastors, seminarians, teachers, women's ministry leaders and other lay leaders. Bill also will be visiting congregations with Rev. Peter Maganda, Dean of the Eastern Deanery. We have not yet been able to raise all of the approximately \$7,000 needed to pay for the expenses related to this mission, the expenses mostly being for housing and food for all of the conference attendees, so we are still requesting donations.

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 of the LCU is raising up spiritual leaders for the church. It all starts with spiritual leadership. LCU leaders know that unless they can raise up spiritual leaders, the other goals of the church will not be met. This is why our ministry in Uganda is so important to the LCU, because that's what's happening at our renewal conferences and renewal weekends; we're helping to raise up spiritual leaders. *Please help us this spring with a generous donation that will help to raise up people to become spiritual leaders in the Lutheran Church of Uganda!*



**Small group session at the 2019 Renewal Conference**



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

Our 2021 Israel tour has been scheduled for January 11-20 and we are now accepting registrations. We have 52 exciting Old and New Testament sites on the tour that will greatly expand your knowledge of Christianity, Judaism, biblical history and archeology. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus in Nazareth, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, Bethlehem, Bethany, the Jordan, Capernaum, Magdala, Mt. Tabor (the Mount of Transfiguration), the Mount of Beatitudes, Caesarea Philippi, and enjoy a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. We'll also visit Masada, Qumran, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found, Herodian, Jericho, Caesarea Maritima and many other historic sites. A tour of Israel truly is an experience you will treasure for the rest of your life. Tour arrangements are being handled by Imagine Tours and Travel, a company that has led hundreds of tours to Israel for over 30 years. Call or e-mail our office for a brochure and registration form, which we can send you either by mail or e-mail.



**Mt. Tabor, traditional site of the Transfiguration, and the Jezreel Valley, viewed from Mt. Precipice, near Nazareth**



**The arch at Tel Dan, thought to be the oldest arch in the world, about 4,000 years old. Tradition says that Abraham passed through this gate when he came to Dan to rescue Lot.**

## PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

She said she enjoyed reading about the saints in college. “Which ones?” I asked. Saint Francis of Assisi came to her mind. Then she added, “and that guy who prayed while he was washing dishes in a monastery.” “That would be Brother Laurence,” I noted. She added, “It was new to me that I could pray while doing other things. My life is so busy I just can’t get the morning time for devotion and prayer that I know I should take.”

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Laurence was a brother in a monastery who prayed while he washed dishes. Two monks wrote down his reflections in a book known as *Practicing the Presence of God*. It’s now a classic in spiritual literature.

For many Christians personal prayer is best done at a certain time set aside for that purpose, usually in the morning. Many read prayers written by others. But research I did based on 548 responses from traditional Protestants showed that almost half did most or all of the praying while doing other things, such as jogging, driving, waiting for appointments, or doing routine chores.

Call this conversational prayer - talking with God about what is on your mind at that time. Call the alternative formal prayer. Which is better? A case can be made for conversational prayer. Paul challenged the Thessalonians “to be joyful always, *pray continually*; and give thanks in all circumstances.” This is the kind of life God wants for his people. Who would not want to live this way?

A character in George Barnano’s *The Diary of a Country Priest* recommends plugging away at formal prayer with this explanation, “If you can’t pray, at least say your prayers! This is not Christian prayer at its best, but true prayer may arise out of it.”

Half of all the respondents in my study reported their prayers as an opportunity to experience a deep sense of peace and to feel the strong presence of God. Half described their prayers as the most satisfying experience in their lives. What a surprise!

Bradley Hanson in our day notes that “Prayer is more than reciting specific prayers - it is communicating with God, the communion with God that enables us to become more nearly our true selves. So prayer is not a technique that can be mastered. Learning to pray involves learning to trust God in all circumstances. It is always the Lord who teaches us to pray. Of course, the Lord uses Scriptures and the lives, words and experiences of others as pointers and guides, but ultimately the real teacher of prayer is God.

Only one out of those many respondents described prayer as a duty, along with the confession he was not fulfilling it. He was reflecting the Lutheran tradition expressed by a theologian who opined in a very Germanic way that “Where there is a willingness to pray it is necessary that the time devoted to that purpose be carefully regulated and the regulations strictly adhered to or prayer will practically end in omission, as a result of the slothfulness and Luke warmth of our nature.”

Even though a prominent theologian, that man didn’t have a clue about how the Holy Spirit works today. Like Christ standing and knocking at the door in Revelations 3, Christ’s Spirit now frequently knocks on the door of the believer’s heart. When we respond in our thoughts, we are launched in the conversation called prayer.

Traditional Protestants lost sight of how the Holy Spirit is active around us today. The story of how that happened is long, told at another time. This gap in our heritage leaves us much impoverished today. We simply don’t believe what Jesus and Paul told us about the one whom we now call the Third Person of the Trinity. We have much to learn from those who take the Spirit more seriously today.

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

*“Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth; help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart.” - Martin Luther*



## **LUTHERAN LAY RENEWAL WEEKEND AT BULANGE, UGANDA**

“Greetings to all our friends who support and pray for the ministry of our church in Uganda to grow in service. Here is a short report about the Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend event which took place at Bulange Lutheran Church/preaching station.

Mr. Eriote Kiirya, who is the worship leader in the community, attended the first Lutheran Lay Renewal Conference in January, 2019 and he went back to teach what he learned. At the time of the conference in 2019, the church had not been planted but the members of Bulange church were worshipping at Nalukero. However, due to distance, the members formed the new church among themselves.

The event started on Saturday, 8th February and ended on Sunday, 9th. Mr. Eriot reported that most of the members in the church are new but they were willing and interested to learn together. It was their first time to meet for such an event in which individuals would pray for one another, sharing spiritual growth in their church and homes and in the communities where they reside.

They said as well that the Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend has created for them a platform to tell more people about what they believe, teach and confess and, by the end of the second day after worship, the church developed a calendar for reaching out to the community with the Word of God. It was also reported that the members are still few in the church as Lutheranism has just been introduced in the community.

One of the challenges they have is that they lack a trained pastor to lead them. Mr. Eriot applied to study at the seminary but currently funding his studies is not yet assured of by the Lutheran Church of Uganda.

The other challenge is to have land for the church. It is reported that land for sale is available but funds are not realized yet.

It's my prayer that we continue praying for this community and the ministry there. I also ask Lutheran Lay Renewal of America to help and identify a source of funding for Eriot to study to become a pastor, and also pray for the church to get land.”

God's blessings to all of you.

Rev. Peter M. Maganda  
Dean Eastern Uganda



**Some of the attendees of the Renewal Weekend at Bulange Lutheran Church**

## SCHEDULED EVENTS

March 14-15	Renewal Weekend Kyabazaala Lutheran Church Mukono District, Uganda The Rev. Buluuba Erifazi, Pastor
April 14-16	Renewal Conference Lutheran Theological College Magamaga, Uganda The Rev. Peter Maganda, Dean Bill Oehlschlager, Conference Speaker
January 11-20, 2021	Israel Tour

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
  - 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
- 

*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**