

# THE VOICE OF RENEWAL

## *The Newsletter of Lutheran Lay Renewal of America*

*Our mission: To promote spiritual renewal and spiritual growth of people and congregations through our renewal weekends, retreats, workshops and conferences.*

**NOVEMBER, 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.**

### **A GOODBYE TRIBUTE TO DICK BROWN, A DEAR FRIEND** **(RICHARD BRUCE BROWN APRIL 15, 1937 – OCTOBER 13, 2020)**

On October 13, 2020, Dick Brown, a beloved past President of Lutheran Lay Renewal, and a dear friend of mine, went to his heavenly home to be reunited with his wife of over 50 years, Beverly, who became a heavenly resident in September, 2019. Dick had his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Dick was a dear friend to many. I had the privilege of knowing him for over twenty years and worked with him, closely, as his Vice President for 15 years before I became President of LLRA in August, 2013. Dick continued on our Board as President Emeritus.

Looking back at history, Dick became President of the Sierra Pacific Synod Lutheran Lay Renewal organization, in August, 1998, after I had served as President for several years. At LLR's national conference, held in Prescott, Arizona, on May 28-31, 1999, attended by approximately fifty people, Dick was voted President of the organization.

Dick had a tremendous faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the ministry of Lutheran Lay Renewal. He was energetic, enthusiastic about LLR's mission, got things done, was very organized and when the LLR office was moved to Dick's home in Pleasant Hill, CA, he became the Office Manager also. In 2009, he was instrumental in forming an "official" Board of Directors. LLR became LLRA (Lutheran Lay Renewal of America) Also, Bill Oehlschlager was hired, at that time, as our Outreach Director to help "promote and market" LLRA.

Dick loved the enthusiasm generated by a LLRA weekend. He took part in all aspects of the ministry, helped re-write the organization's By-Laws, took care of referrals prior to Bill coming onboard, was a witness on several weekends and often, he was the weekend coordinator. He, indeed, was the "spark plug." You hardly ever saw him without a smile on his face. He loved people and the interaction experienced on a LLRA weekend. Even though Dick was plagued by physical and medical challenges as the years went by, his interest and enthusiasm, for LLRA, never waned.

Because of Covid-19 a funeral for Dick was not possible. Dick had pre-planned a glorious "Celebration of Life" event which his daughter, Susan, and son, David, plan to hold in the Spring of 2021. With the delay in being able to pay our respects, in person, to the family, cards can be mailed to Dick's address:

THE BROWN FAMILY  
1464 PARKHAVEN DRIVE  
PLEASANT HILL, CA 94523

Elaine Schomaker, President Emeritus of LLRA

## IT'S BEEN A TOUGH YEAR AND WE ALL COULD USE A SPIRITUAL BOOST

It's been a difficult year and your congregation probably needs a spiritual boost right now, like our Sharing Your Faith workshop or Seven Lessons for Living the Spiritual Life retreat. Perhaps your congregation is not yet ready for or comfortable with an in-person workshop or retreat and, if so, how about a virtual workshop or retreat? The technology is available and people can participate from home, while still being able to have discussions and ask questions. These workshops and retreats have been praised by pastors and lay leaders all across the U.S. for many years. Interested? Contact our office!

*"The team that led the spiritual transformation workshops at Holy Cross was first-class. They knew their material well, demonstrating not only an academic knowledge of the subject, but an experiential acquaintance with the spiritual life in the deep Christian tradition to buttress it. Their passion for Christ, Lutheran grounding in the dynamics of Law and Gospel, and familiarity with the tradition catholic gave their presentations (particularly the question and answer sessions) a profundity often lacking in the slickly produced offerings of ministries promoted by major publishing houses. I would highly recommend them as an integrated part of your congregation's catechetical and Christian formation ministries." - Rev. Brett Jenkins, STS, Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nazareth, PA*

## LLR CONTINUES SUPPORT FOR UGANDA AND RWANDA

At our October Board of Directors meeting, our board voted to continue providing financial support to the Lutheran Church of Uganda and the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda. This support includes funding for the LCU's Lay Leadership Training program, which trains lay leaders to serve congregations that do not have a pastor.

*"We thank God for this great opportunity to revive the training of the Lay-leader to boost the ministry of the laypeople in our congregations! Thank you LLR of America, Mr. Bill and the entire BOD for this support. Cordial greetings and the Lords blessings."*

*Bishop Charles I. Bameka*

*National Presiding Bishop, LCU*

## JOIN US IN ISRAEL, JANUARY, 2022!

Due to the worldwide pandemic, our Israel tour has been postponed until 2022. The new dates are January 10-19 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, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Magdala, Bethany, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Jordan, 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.



MORNING SKY OVER JERUSALEM

**imagine**  
TOURS & TRAVEL

## HOW DO I FIND TRUE HAPPINESS?

I was recently asked, “Kevin, how can I find true happiness?”

“True Happiness” is a word trap. Here’s why.

Let’s run with the concept of us having three natures: Body, Mind, and Spirit. Happiness and sadness are inevitable swings on the emotional spectrum that fall into the realm of the Mind or mental health. Emotions are based on conditions: Birth of a healthy child — happy! Death of a parent or friend — sad.

“True happiness” implies a state of constant euphoria. About the only people in a state of constant happiness have a form of dementia — they’re disconnected from reality. Their minds aren’t fully functioning. Of course, for those around them, that beats the other extreme of constant anger and aggression.

### **How’s the State of Your Spirit?**

May I have your permission to replace “true happiness” with words such as peace, joy, and contentment? These words reside in our state of being or of our Spirit both with and apart from experiencing happiness or sadness. There’s a maturity of accepting reality and conditions for what they are while still maintaining a healthy perspective and state of well-being. There’s emotional connection as well as emotional boundaries.

Jesus is Joy, period. As Christians we gain an advantage being brothers and sisters of the Prince of Peace. Unlike Saul, but like Paul, we stand on the Rock of our Relationship with God.

### **Inevitably life is jarring to Body, Mind, and Spirit.**

Peace and joy, however, are like internal gyroscopes readily resetting us to our better nature. We may go through and hell and back during the reset, but we’re not left spinning out of control and stuck in chaos and confusion simply because “true happiness” is our primary mistaken metric for our well-being.

Perhaps, the most dramatic example of this comes from Dr. Viktor Frankl’s famous book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, and his ensuing logotherapy work. In his book, he recounts surviving a Nazi concentration camp. The inherent meaning of life and one’s identity being anchored in something greater than oneself (Hint: God) sustains us despite the most vile treatment and despicable conditions.

### **Purpose Is the First Stone on the Pathway to Peace**

My decades-long work about purpose and being on-purpose sees purpose as our cause or reason for being. It is the first stone on the pathway to know who you are in Christ, “The Way” to peace, joy, and contentment. The more you press into knowing your purpose, the more predictably you’ll find joy despite the circumstance. Purpose inspires a positive perspective and attitude that forms an armor of protection from circumstantial slings and arrows.

Whereas most of us confuse purpose with mission or what we’re doing, that’s conflating the effect with the cause. Purpose is the cause and missions are the effect or expression of the purpose.

In the simplest of terms, missions fail or succeed, so sadness or happiness follows. Purpose is permanent — it just exists! It helps us process our emotions with healthy objectivity and perspective. Purpose puts us in our “right spirit”—one with Christ, child of the Father, and keeper of the Holy Spirit.

We must, however, search for purpose in order to know our purpose. Enter [ONPURPOSE.me](http://ONPURPOSE.me) to make the search ingeniously fast and forever meaningful. Once we know our purpose, then we can harness the amazing power of our purpose to align our lives to our original Garden of Eden goodness and reason for being. The intangible becomes tangible and functional.

## **Emotions are information. Impaired emotions are dangerous!**

Therefore, happiness or sadness is information to the Mind and processed by the Spirit living in our heart that when grounded in purpose provides a bedrock of resilience. While the Mind and Body can get stuck or impaired in the emotion and feelings, the strength of the on-purpose Spirit owns a healthy “emotional distance” calling us into a state of peace, joy, and contentment. Unfortunately, too few of us are equipped or trained to engage our purpose in this manner. It’s also why we need other on-purpose persons to help us right our upsets.

Purpose, like the God of the universe, just exists. It is inherently good (versus evil). Your God-given purpose in life maps your way to your forever grace place within you that is good, nourishing, and safe even if all hell is breaking loose around you. The power of finding your 2-word purpose means you are no longer a slave to emotional swings, especially to events outside of your control, such as election results or an adult child making unwise decisions.

Being in possession of your life purpose, you gain a touchstone that’s simple, practical, and, most of all, permanently with you. This Christlikeness is your positive and productive heart home to soothe sadness and high-five happiness.

You are an on-purpose person in creation when you acknowledge you are in the world, not at the mercy of it. Own how powerfully positioned you are to navigate life true to who you are in Christ. When you see the world sharpening you instead of just cutting you, then you can uncompromisingly give thanks for being in the world, but not of it.

*“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”*

*“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” - John 17:15-21 ESV*

Peace, joy, and contentment are the Christian’s standard for “true happiness.” This threefold state of being exclusively emanates from being in God; yet is inclusively offered to all who ask. In short, it is our Oneness with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit that delights and strengthens us in times of trials and humbles us in triumphs.

Kevin W. McCarthy is the author of [The On-Purpose Person, Making Your Life Make Sense](#), and the creator of [ONPURPOSE.me](#), a tool for finding your God-given purpose in life in just 2-words.

*Editor’s Note: Kevin is a friend of our Executive Director, who heartily recommends Kevin’s book The On-Purpose Person and also the book On-Purpose Peace, An Interactive Small Group Guide for Christians Gathering to Read The On-Purpose Person. For more information go to [www.ONPURPOSE.me](http://www.ONPURPOSE.me).*

*Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” – John 18:37*

*“A saint’s life is in the hands of God as a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see; He stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says, I cannot stand any more. But God does not heed; He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, then He lets fly.” – Oswald Chambers*

## INTERPRETING THE REFORMATION 500 YEARS LATER

We Lutherans make a big deal about the Reformation. We celebrate it on October 31, the date in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

These very scholarly statements challenged the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church at that time, which was the only institutional Christian church in northwestern Europe. Within five years his invitation to debate had set off a fire storm throughout all of Northern Europe. Nothing was the same afterwards.

Because of our ethnic origins, Lutherans have been a marginal force in American Protestantism. John Calvin launched a second reformation nineteen years later with his summary *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The descendants of John Calvin have had much more influence. But now Luther's emphasis on grace is providing new focus for pastors and churches intent on reaching out to our changing society.

During my years as an administrative leader at Fuller Theological Seminary, I spent a lot of time and conversations trying to figure out the difference between Lutherans and Calvinists. Fuller was founded as an interdenominational seminary that has long felt the influence of moderate Reformed theology. Baptists, too, have a Calvinist outlook on living out the Christian faith. "Should" is a key part of the Calvinist vocabulary.

Here is a basic insight: Martin Luther was trying to *reform the church* and its teachings. John Calvin was trying to *reform the behavior* of Christians. These are two very different outlooks on Christian church life. Personally, I think that the Calvinist heritage no longer fits well the new American culture the way it did several generations ago.

Admittedly, I am biased. But this bias is not only by heritage but especially toward more effective ministry today. Whose platform—Luther's or Calvin's—will better reach more people in our times?

Here are some other differences:

- a. John Calvin wrote about grace but took away much of its meaning by his dominant emphasis on reformed behavior. Martin Luther was a Bible scholar who re-discovered and explained Paul's concept of grace, letting the chips fall where they may.
- b. Calvin relied on politics to establish his view of reformed church life. It was the Geneva town council that allowed him to enforce his theocracy. In his early years, Luther did not try to manipulate political forces. They just happened to work in his favor. He was protected by a key prince of his day in the very complicated politics of the Holy Roman Empire. What a great reminder that we live by faith, not by politics.
- c. Which is a better platform today? Is it staking out a Christian ethical position and trying to enforce it on a whole nation? Or is it focusing on the Kingdom of God and adjusting to whatever politics emerge at a given time. A Calvinist approach is turning off greater numbers of bystanders and raising increased hostility to institutional churches. What happened to grace?
- d. Martin Luther was a much better communicator than John Calvin, who was a lawyer writing in dry legalese. Floating around in Calvinist circles, I noticed that Luther got quoted much more than Calvin. Among his many gifts, Luther could turn a good and memorable phrase. He worked hard at appealing to his growing audience. That's a big part of why it grew.

A take-away for today is the increased importance of good preaching in a media age. Effective preaching is not just a matter of content; it is also grabbing and holding attention. Such ability is a gift. Discover who has it and feature that preacher as much as possible.

- e. Martin Luther himself had a great appreciation for the Holy Spirit, at least in his early years. A Bible scholar, he did not have to fit the unpredictable Spirit into a rational scheme. John Calvin, in contrast, was a systematic theologian who had little appreciation for what was not rational.

In this post-Modern age, young adults in particular have a greater appreciation for the supernatural. Most “get” the Spirit and are looking for a better Spiritual life. They also appreciate the world of grace that sets them free. Let Martin Luther lead the way into the future of Protestant churches in America.

The Rev. Dave Luecke, Ph. D. – Dr. Luecke is a member of our Board of Directors

*“The heart overflows with gladness, and leaps and dances for the joy it has found in God. In this experience the Holy Spirit is active, and has taught us in the flash of a moment the deep secret of joy. You will have as much joy and laughter in life as you have faith in God.” — Martin Luther*

*“Christ is the only means, and as you might say, the mirror in which we can see God and by whom we can also know His will, for in Christ, we see that God is no cruel and demanding judge but a Father of extremely goodwill, loving and merciful. In order to bless us—that is, to deliver us from the law, sin, death, all evil, and to grant us grace, righteousness, and eternal life—He “did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.” This is the true knowledge of God, the divine persuasion that does not deceive us but paints us a trustworthy picture of God, other than this there is no God.” — Martin Luther*

**“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 Elaine Schomaker, Alexis Gurnard, Dan and Kathie Klueg
  - For the Lord’s protection over all doctors, nurses and other hospital workers, police officers, firefighters and all men and women in our armed forces
  - For racial harmony and reconciliation in the United States
  - For the Lord’s blessings on our ministry in the U.S., Uganda and Rwanda, and for the financial resources that are needed for this ministry
  - For wisdom and guidance for the LLRA Board of Directors, as we seek to grow and expand our ministry
- 

*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 and Rwanda!*

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