



# *The Voice of Renewal*

NEWSLETTER OF LUTHERAN LAY RENEWAL OF AMERICA

*Renewing faith and promoting spiritual growth in individuals and congregations  
with renewal weekends, retreats, workshops, and conferences*

*Celebrating 51 years!*

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**September, A.D. 2022**

## **RENEWAL WEEKEND AT ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, KIYANJA-BUHWEJU, UGANDA**

“Greetings to all my brothers and sisters in Christ world-wide, most especially Lutheran Lay Renewal of America, the faithful servants of God in all your doings. We bring our heartfelt and humble thanks for the service rendered by Lutheran Lay Renewal of America. We all thank and bless the Executive Director, William Oehlschlager, for the good work in expanding God's kingdom. Our weekend renewal started 22nd-24th July and ended with a worship service on 24th.

One of the congregants, the first Lutheran in this district (Buhweju), Mr. John Kyabahwa, said: ‘The renewal program is good and necessary to keep on at church and in community at large because it brings about spiritual growth, and each congregant got to understand his/her role.’ He stated that one of the challenges is facilitation and besides that, it would be better to hold this program monthly. He also talked about men's and women's sessions that opened up the minds and hearts as the root of spiritual growth. ‘Once parents understand their responsibility at home and church, their children will grow in faith for service,’ he said. We give thanks to him for giving us his compound to put our temporary building for worship.

Our weekend renewal impressed and gave answers to what seemed unanswered through the sessions in God's word. Congregants found out that it's good for a Christian to live a godly life; one's life has to be renewed daily by repentance and prayers in reflection to God's word. In general, they found out a new relationship with God that was renewed by the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In addition to that, congregants, as we opened up, expected their lives to be renewed, from movements, deeds and thoughts. At every day, we had night prayers for miraculous wonders and heart desires answered. Meanwhile, congregants asked for the change of their life in families and church differing from what it has been. Furthermore, they learnt about their spiritual life, looked at the change in life over past years and what it means to often keep their faith; learnt of the recipe they should follow and what ingredients to be applied. They committed themselves to following God's recipe in regards to Psalm 34:8.

Not only these, but they also learnt to be prayerful at home, parents leading their households in learning the Bible and getting committed to train their children in order to nurture them spiritually. All committed themselves to Jesus Christ and to use their gifts to serve God in different ways. We were not able to have youth, for they're at school. We ended up with Divine Service on Sunday.

We're all looking for funds to buy land for the church and constructing the permanent church. This temporary one we're in is at one's house in compound and people can't fit in, for it's small and people are very poor to raise funds for such great work; they are striving to meet their ends.

I therefore commit everyone into God's hands that He who started this good work of proclaiming the gospel, continue to bless everyone in this ministry, most especially renewal program, as it's a blessing to the many, that it may continue to be fruitful and bring many to the knowledge and saving grace of God, in Jesus' name I pray.

Our next Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend will be at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Ishongororo Town Council, Ibanda District, Southwestern Deanery, 30<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October. I will be traveling a distance of almost 100km from where I stay.” – Nicholus Ayebazibwe, Vicar



**Vicar Nicholus Ayebazibwe with the congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church, Kiyanja-Buhweju**

### **LAND PURCHASED FOR SERERE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Thanks to the efforts of our Vice President, Lou McKibben, and the good people of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wexford, PA who donated the funds, we were able to send enough funds to the Eastern Deanery of the Lutheran Church of Uganda to purchase a large piece of land for Serere Lutheran Church. Many thanks to all!



**One view of the large plot of land purchased for Serere Lutheran Church**

## RENEWAL WEEKEND AT MBULAMUTI LUTHERAN CHURCH

“Mbulamuti Lutheran Church of Uganda was blessed to host the Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend, which took place on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 2022. This conference was attended by many parishioners both adult and youth totaling to 70 and in these people, we had teachers from the church founded school ‘Mbulamuti Lutheran Primary School.’ This conference was led by the Dean Eastern Deanery of Lutheran Church of Uganda, Rev. Peter Maganda, with the help of Rev. Micheal and Vicar Otesa Anthony.

Congregants experienced sharing while discussing in the groups and they got exposed to each other. Learning new ideas as they were getting to their notes that prayers are not only prayed by pastors or lay leaders only, but it is their role as Christians to pray themselves and even to pray for their pastors. Praying for each other in the group of two people was also another experience for them. This gave them courage and strength in their life as Christians. The program of them visiting others as Christians was also shared in this conference.

This has changed the life of many congregants who attended the conference and some teachers who attended have accepted Christ as their Savior and joined the church. Those who attended are still calling for the repeat of the weekend if there is a chance. But it is more in demand to those who did not attend, after being briefed by their fellow Christians. Votes of thanks go to the Rev. Peter Maganda for choosing Mbulamuti Lutheran church to host the Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend and to Lutheran Lay Renewal of America for coming up with such a good idea. Vote of thanks also goes to all Christians who attended this conference.” - Rev. Micheal Waiswa, Pastor



Photos from the Renewal Weekend at Mbulamuti Lutheran Church

## LAND PURCHASE FOR NAKAVUMA LUTHERAN CHURCH

Just a few days ago, we received this message from our good friend Pastor Erifazi Buluba, Pastor of Kyabazaala Lutheran Church in the Eastern Deanery of the Lutheran Church of Uganda. Pastor Erifazi oversees 13 congregations in the deanery: “This is a humble request to you, towards the purchase of additional land for Nakavuma Lutheran Church. Nakavuma Lutheran Church was opened up by the Christians of Kyabazaala Lutheran Church after carrying out an evangelism to Nakavuma zone and people accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. We had to start up a church. One Christian donated land to the church which is 20 ft. by 150 ft., where we are praying from. And now she wants to sell to the church an additional land of 40 ft. by 150 ft. at 2,500,000. Buying that land we shall be having a church property equal to 60 ft. by 150 ft. Therefore, I ask that you support us with that amount of money to acquire that land for the development of Nakavuma Lutheran Church, as well as expansion of God's ministry to different places. However, we appreciate all the support you are rendering to us.” One of our board members has now sent the funds to the Eastern Deanery to make this land purchase for the new Lutheran congregation in Nakavuma. *Editor's note: 2,500,000 Uganda Shillings equal US\$653.00.*

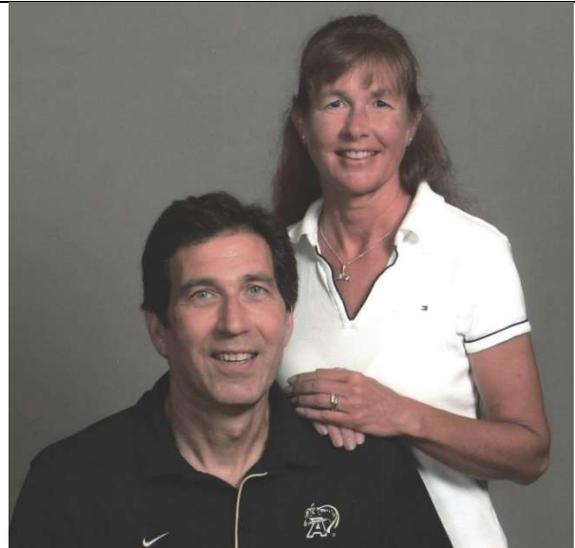


**Parcel of land being purchased for the new Nakavuma congregation**

## BOARD ELECTION

Our Board of Directors met on Sunday, August 28 and during the meeting one new board member was elected and three were reelected. Those reelected were Vice President Lou McKibben, Karen Ferrari, to now serve as both Secretary and Treasurer, and board member the Rev. David Luecke, Ph.D. Newly elected to the board was David Fugate, who wrote this brief bio for us.

“David is originally from Wheeling, WV, and attended college at Carnegie Mellon University, receiving degrees in Electrical Engineering. He remained in the Pittsburgh area after college, taking a job at the Westinghouse Science & Technology Center for several years before joining a small consulting company, Electric Research & Management, where he still works as an engineer. David has been married to Deborah for 37 years and they have a son, Michael. They have been members of St. Luke’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saxonburg, PA since 1994, and reside in Cabot, PA.”



**David and Deborah Fugate**

## READ GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

“Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflecting on Scripture.” Such is the conclusion of a massive study that gathered data from participants in 1,000 congregations of a cross-section of Protestant denominations.

Note the keyword “reflection” on Scripture. God’s Word comes in two forms. One is the familiar Bible of almost 800,000 words and over 1,000 pages. The other is the Word that was God expressing himself in creation and becoming flesh in Jesus. This Word is the creative force that changes lives today.

There are two ways to read the Bible. One is for *information*. The other is for *formation*. The amount of information is overwhelming, especially those covering the 1,500 years of the Old Testament. The New Testament is only one-fifth the total length and is more manageable, covering only about 100 years. It also focuses more on grace-centered living.

While reading the Bible is basic, the key to spiritual growth is reflecting on what you read with the question, “What does this mean for me now?” This is reading for *formation*. Reading for *information* amounts to preparation for the formation payoff.

In reading Scripture for formation, the four Gospels are easier to apply to a person’s life today because they tell us what Jesus did and the way he guided and challenged those around him. We can imagine ourselves in their place. Within the Gospels, Jesus’ parables are the easiest to apply to my personal life now. One of the most popular is the proud Pharisee bragging about what he did for God and the humble Tax Collector who simply said, God have mercy on mercy on me, a sinner. Where have you been proud of what you are doing for God? How and where could you be more humble in your daily walk? That’s *formation*.

### **Will You Be In-Spirited?**

The 800,000-word Bible presents divinely inspired truth. Inspired means in-Spirited. The creative Spirit was at work among the various authors whose words we read. That creative Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Now ascended, he and the Father delegate that creative force to his Spirit, who dwells among us today.

Here’s the issue. Will the readers of the 800,00 words be creatively “in-Spirited” also? They will if they are willing to move beyond reading for *information* to reading for *formation*. This amounts to being shaped by the Spirit.

Paul urged that his readers “be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is” (Romans 12:2). We add, his will for you. It is certainly true for all people. But when you are reading for formation, the emphasis is on what this creative Word means for you personally. How will your life be transformed by what you are hearing from God? Elsewhere, Paul described how “we are being transformed into Christ’s likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3: 18).

The Bible is not meant to be read cover to cover. Most readers get bogged down in Leviticus and Numbers and give up. It is a collection of God-inspired writings of different types of literature, including the poetry of the Psalms and the symbolism of Revelation, parts of which were not meant to be taken literally. Each book needs to be interpreted according to the type of literature it is. Yet Scripture is infallible in what it teaches about the relation between God and his people.

### **How to Absorb God’s Word**

How do you read God’s Word in order to be shaped by the Spirit? Slowly and with the realization that the Spirit comes at his initiative. What you can do is take the initiative to place yourself in the Spirit’s workshop. Reading by yourself is a good start. To Scriptures themselves, add reading a well-written devotional that interprets a passage and applies it to daily living. But the best workshop is where the Word is being shared and applied by others

around you. That happens especially in small groups that discuss the meaning of a particular Word for them personally.

Traditionally, most believers absorbed God's truth through listening to sermons. In earlier centuries most believers were illiterate. Still today in our developed society many cannot read well. It is a learned skill. Also, some are dyslexic. The usual advice to just "read the Word" has limited value to those for whom reading is a challenge.

Sermons are most productive when they move beyond conveying biblical information. The payoff is the application, which many preachers don't do well. As a preacher, I earlier thought my job was simply to announce and explain biblical truths. Over the years I grew more conscious of the need to also offer practical illustrations and applications, and I admire preachers who do that well. Preaching for formation is an advanced skill.

I have felt in-Spirited to think and write about the role of the Holy Spirit in personal and church life. This kind of inspiration is not at all on the level of the inspired writers of the Scriptures. But I am convinced the Spirit has been at work in me and through my words in the lives and ministries of others. What a privilege!

Has Christ's Spirit inspired you to take some action or speak some words that had a spiritual impact on others? Almost certainly. We in traditional churches have had many experiences of the Spirit. But we have not been taught the meaning. Let the Spirit do more of his formative work in you. When you are not sure you are hearing the Spirit right, seek the perspective of mature Christians who know you. Pray for the courage to follow where the Spirit is leading.

Paul told the Corinthians that he gave them milk, not yet solid food. What is the solid food he had in mind? I used to think it was doctrinal information in ever greater detail. But now I see it is about how to live together in a fellowship of Christ. There is ever more to learn about relationships in church communities and how these can be more fruitful through formation by the Spirit.

## **Meditation**

Practicing "mindfulness" has become a popular term, typically in the context of counseling. Psychologists are re-discovering the value of mindfulness in coping with the challenges of modern living. The current version traces its origins to Buddha. But we Christians have a longer heritage, going back to the psalmist whose delight is in the law of the Lord, on which Word he meditates day and night.

The modern practice of mindfulness teaches how to focus on a single word or phrase, called a mantra, for as long as possible. God's people have been focusing on certain Bible passages since the beginning. Their mantras can be seen on wall plaques in the home or heard in phrases in a conversation. Some are: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." "In all things, God works for the good of those who love him." "Those who hope in the Lord will soar on wings like eagles." Such focus is basic to formation through the Word.

Theologically trained preachers tend to make the biblical Word complicated. The Bible has so much information. Most believers, in my experience, keep it simple in living out their daily relationship with God. Strengthen their core convictions with care, so they are slowly formed by the in-Spirited Word, not just exposed to biblical information that passes them by. – The Rev. David Luecke, Ph.D.

**Do you read the Bible more for *information* or *formation*? How have you received a Word that the Spirit used to inspire you to take some action or speak some words that had a spiritual impact on others? Do you meditate on God's Word?**

*"The soul can do without everything except the Word of God, without which none at all of its wants are provided for. But, having the Word, it is rich and wants for nothing, since that is the word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of justification, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of virtue, of grace, of glory, and of every good thing." – Martin Luther*

# DIOCESE OF NORTHWEST ANKOLE

## Youth Ministry – August Newsletter

### BISHOP'S CUP TOURNAMENT 2022

Thank you all for your prayers and support, we had a successful month of August that was characterized by many events in the diocese. Our sports tournaments finally came to an end. This was focused to reach out to youth of the diocese through sport evangelism. We are glad that we were able to reach out to the youth.



*Rev. Medard, sharing the word of God, after the final match as we prepared to give awards and medals to the best youth teams.*

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 3:14



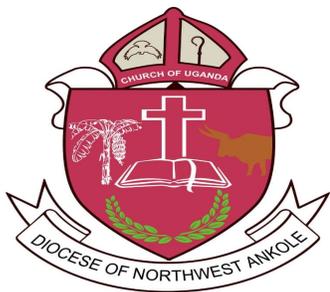
*Clergy, and youth leaders, greeting the teams that had reached the final game before the game kicked off as youth in the background look on.*



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#### **Youth ministry DNWA**

The upcoming event is the Annual Youth and Children's Gathering that will be from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

We expect over 1000 youth and children and about \$11,428 is needed for the convention.

**FOR GOD'S GLORY**

## OUR PARTNERS IN AFRICA NEED OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The financial needs of our partners in Africa are great, as Uganda and Rwanda are two of the 20 poorest countries in the world. Below is a wish list of current financial needs. Would you or your congregation be willing to help?

### **Lutheran Church of Uganda**

\$100 will pay the salary of a nurse at the Niagobya Medical Clinic for one month.

\$200 will buy a three-month supply of medicines at the clinic.

\$2,500 will pay for a student to attend the Lutheran seminary for a year.

Funds are needed to buy uniforms, lunch and Bibles for school children.

Funds are needed to support the Lutheran Lay Leaders Training program.

\$1,500 will buy a motorcycle for a pastor or vicar. At least three motorcycles are needed. Pastors and vicars serving rural congregations must walk long distances every week to visit parishioners and still are not able to reach all of them.

### **Anglican Diocese of Northwest Ankole, Uganda**

\$90 per year will pay for school fees, scholastic materials, a uniform and school bag for a child in a rural school.

\$211 per year will pay for school fees, scholastic materials, a uniform and a school bag for a student in a rural secondary school.

Funds also are needed to support the growing youth ministry of the diocese. Thanks to donations from some of our Anglican friends, we have been able to provide \$3,000 of support to the diocese this year.

### **Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda**

This year our highest priorities for funding for the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda have been the purchase of Kinyarwanda language Bibles and funds for the Lay Leaders Training Program. Pastor Jean Claude Maniragaba, President of the RLCR, writes that funds are needed to purchase Kinyarwanda language Bibles for new believers, so they can read the Word of God in their own language. \$70 will pay for 10 Bibles.

The Lay Leaders Training Program is training men, women and youth in Biblical studies, and to be leaders in their congregations. The RLCR also is training Lutheran adults to be deacons and deaconesses. Thanks to generous donations, we have been able to provide funds to help with both of these needs but more funds are needed.

Pastor Jean Claude also is requesting funds to purchase land and to build church buildings. "Our RLCR needs to build the Church building for the Congregation of Rwempasha and the Congregation of Ntoma. And the church does not have funds to do this hard work. And the believers of these congregations are poor. We need God's grace."

*One hundred percent of any donations to Lutheran Lay Renewal will go to the need designated by the donor or, if you prefer to work directly with a church in Africa, contact our office and we will put you in touch with church leaders there.*

### **SCHEDULED EVENTS**

*Please keep these events in your prayers, for all who are making preparations, for good attendance, for God's blessings on all who attend and his protection over everyone involved.*

September 21-23

Lutheran Church of Uganda Partners Conference  
Concordia Lutheran Church  
Kirkwood, MO

September 30-October 2

Renewal Weekend  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Ishongororo Town Council, Ibanda District, Uganda  
Nicholus Ayebazibwe, Leader

November 5

Spiritual Transformation Retreat  
Mon Valley Lutheran Parish  
Held at Christ Lutheran Church, West Newton, PA  
Revs. Frank Zeman and Matthew Stabe, Pastors  
Bill Oehlschlager, Retreat Leader

**“Like” us on Facebook - Lutheran Lay Renewal of America**  
**We post all of our upcoming events on our Facebook page.**

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## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

- Healing for Elaine Schomaker, Julie, 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 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
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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!*

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*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 in Uganda and Rwanda!*

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**Renewal Weekend at Mbulamuti Lutheran Church**