



A 25-YEAR OVERVIEW OF ILME

In 1989, the history of Lutheran Marriage Encounter was compiled by the NAR Historian Couple, John & Sally Duenow and published in Call to be Family. In commemoration of ILME's Twenty-fifth Anniversary, we have given all ILME Districts and other Regions the opportunity to update their histories. What follows is the result. Your Editor Couple thanks all who dug deep into their archives and furnished us with information about the happenings in their communities since 1989.

Much has been printed over the years about International Lutheran Marriage Encounter that speaks of our beginnings and the beginning of our parent organization, Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

It is our intent, with this publication, to bring as much information as possible all together into one booklet. We want to give you many facts and figures, including a time line of events. Most of all, we invite you to join us in hearing some of the stories that are also part of our history! So sit back in your chair and imagine you are at a big family reunion, seated amidst some folk that are reminiscing... remembering when...

Our roots started some 37 years ago in Spain with a movement called Encuentro Conyugai, begun by Fr. Calvo. It was brought to the English speaking world at a Catholic Family Conference at Notre Dame University in 1967. The seeds of this experience provided the roots of Worldwide Marriage Encounter as we know it, with the first ever U.S. weekend being held in Nov., 1968, in New York, with 7 couples attending. Fr. Chuck

Gallagher was the "founding father".

In the beginning, the couples were asked to write personal reflections and share their thoughts and ideas. Feelings and loveletters were yet to come. The teams presenting the weekend also prepared the food.

The menu for those first Catholic week-ends was: beans and franks for Sat lunch; Lasagna for Sat. dinner; cereal and Danish for breakfasts and shrimp salad for Sunday lunch. Yes, the teams prepared the meals... that is, until one time they were making so much noise in the kitchen, Fr. Chuck sent them to their rooms to dialogue! That was the beginning of their full participation in the weekend.

About this same time (1969) songs from "Man of LaMancha" were added. A year later (1970) they discovered sharing feelings and writing love-letters was a better way to experience each other than sharing ideas in a personal reflection.

Fr. Chuck Gallagher believed Marriage Encounter was for the whole church, not just Roman Catholics, so 20% of the spaces on Catholic week-ends were held open for interfaith and other faith marriages. Out of those began Episcopal (1971) and Jewish encounter, and many more. At present, there are 11 faiths that make up the Interfaith Board. All Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends, regardless of faith, must use the same outline, with one exception. The Sunday morning talk is adapted to each particular faith's beliefs.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter was at its peak when Lutheran Marriage Encounter came on board. Its organizational roots began in May,

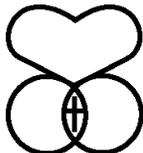
1975, in Cheney, WA with Don & Karen Kurtz. There were, however, many other areas in the country where couples were having similar ideas about beginning LME. Phone calls came from Bruce & Andrea Maynes in Los Angeles, John & Bev Lang in San Jose; John & Ruthe Enstad in St. Paul, MN. and Dick & Kathie Thorpe in Phoenix,

The first weekend was held in Spokane, WA in October of 1975, and all these other areas began holding weekends within the next six months! The Incorporation Board members were: Don & Karen Kurtz, John & Sally Duenow, Phil & Doreen Maakestad, Tom & Patty Steen (all of Cheney, WA) Carl & Maureen Ogren (Spokane, WA), John & Bev Lang (Milpitas, CA) and Bruce & Andrea Maynes (Valencia, CA).

With the help of the Episcopal encounter, the outline was adapted for a clergy couple (rather than a priest). Lutheran theology needed for the Sunday talk was established through an "Addendum" to the outline prepared by Phil & Doreen Maakestad and several of the first clergy teams. All along the line, we were encouraged by our Catholic ME family to be the best of who we were as Lutherans.

Catholic encounter supported us emotionally, physically and even financially. They workshopped talks, supplied notebooks, pens, etc., and provided prayer couples for that first weekend. They even paid for the plane tickets from San Jose to Spokane to fly in the fourth Lutheran team needed on that first weekend! Their enthusiasm and encouragement from all over the country reinforced us again and again. It is a story line you will find often as you read about the beginnings of ILME in each area.

Marriage Encounter Time Line



1968

November, Fr. Chuck Gallagher holds the first Catholic weekend in New York. Seven (7) couples attend.

Couples write about personal reflections and share their thoughts and ideas.

1969

Music from the "Man of LaMancha" is added to the weekend.

1970

The sharing of feelings and writing of love letters becomes the better way to experience each other than sharing ideas in a personal reflection.

Fr. Gallagher believes M.E. is for the whole church, not just Roman Catholics, so 20% of the space on a Catholic weekend is held open for interfaith and other faith marriages.

1971

Episcopal M.E. begins
Jewish M.E. begins

1975

May 28th, Lutheran Marriage Encounter holds first organizational meeting at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Cheney, WA.

FIRST WEEKEND:

Oct. 19th First L.M.E. Weekend held in Spokane, WA.

Dec. 7th Second L.M.E. Weekend in Spokane, WA.

1976

FIRST WEEKENDS:

JAN. 18th Northern CA San Jose
JAN. 25th Southern CA Los Angeles
FEB. 22nd Phoenix, AZ
APR. 11th Orange Co., CA
APR. 25th St. Paul, MN
MAY 2nd Team Deeper, Los Angeles
MAY 30th Ohio
JUNE 20th Eugene, OR
AUG. 8th Seattle, WA
SEPT. 26th Escondido, CA & Las Vegas, NV
DEC. 5th Pittsburgh, PA

1,189 couples encountered FY*

(*FY = Fiscal Year, August -July)

1977

FIRST WEEKENDS

FEB. 6th Toledo, OH
MAY 1st St. Louis, MO
JUNE 12th Butler, PA
JULY 7th Warren, MI
AUG. 21st Des Moines, IA
SEPT. 11th Corpus Christi, TX
OCT. 9th Reno, NV
OCT. 23rd La Crosse, WI
NOV. 6th Fargo, ND
NOV. 20th Houston, TX
NOV. 27th Delaware Valley, PA



Lutheran Marriage Encounter
Incorporates as "Call to be Family"
May 28, at Cheney, WA.

In Attendance:

Don & Karen Kurtz, Cheney, WA;
John & Sally Duenow, Cheney, WA;
Phil & Doreen Maakestad, Cheney, WA;
Tom & Patty Steen, Cheney, WA;
Carl & Maureen Ogren, Spokane, WA;
John & Bev Lang, Milpitas, CA; Bruce & Andrea Maynes, Valencia, CA.

First National Family Reunion,
June 24-26, Cal State Univ., Long Beach, CA. Theme: "Called to be Family" Called to be Joyful, to love one another, to reach out.

1978

FIRST WEEKENDS:

FEB. 16th Chicago, IL
JUNE 11th Denver, CO
JULY 11th Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
SEPT. 22nd Kansas City, MO
OCT. 7th San Bernardino, CA
NOV. 5th Brookings, SD
NOV. 19th Pocatello, ID
NOV. Ontario, Canada

Second National Family Reunion, June 23-25, Cal State Univ., Long Beach, CA. Theme: "Called to be One, Called to be committed to follow"

5,460 couples encountered FY*

1979

FIRST WEEKENDS:

JAN. 5th Anchorage, AK
FEB. 18th Mattoon, IL
MAR. 25th Boise, ID
APR. 11th El Paso, TX
MAY 6th Omaha, NE
JULY 11th National Capital Area
JULY 18th San Antonio, TX

Third National Family Reunion, June 22-24, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN.

Theme: "Reach out with Love"

6,106 couples encountered FY*

1980

FIRST WEEKENDS:

JAN. 27th Ft. Wayne, IN
FEB. 17th Red Deer, AB Canada
JUNE 8th Atlanta, GA
JULY 7th Billings, MT or Great Falls
OCT. 31st Penticton, BC
NOV. 14th Winnipeg, MB. Canada

FIRST DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "We are one in love"

Dist. I Cleveland, OH
Dist. II Warrensburg, MO
Dist. III Bismark, ND
Dist. IV San Diego, CA
Dist. V Tacoma, WA

8,466 couples encountered FY*

JUNE 27, 1980 "Call To Be Family In Canada" incorporated in Canada

1981

FIRST WEEKENDS:

FEB. Rockford, IL
MAY 17th Sarasota/Venice, FL
MAY 31st Albuquerque, NM
SEPT. 27th Regina, Sk. Canada
NOV. 1st Pembroke, On. Canada

Fourth National Family Reunion, June 26-28, Capital University, Columbus, Ohio
Theme: "Our Rainbow Revolution"

8,406 couples encountered FY*.

1982

FIRST WEEKENDS:

JAN. 3rd Norway
APR. 18th Salt Lake City, UT.

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Coming Alive"

Dist. I Allentown, PA.
Dist. II Denton, TX.
Dist. III Golden Valley, MN. Dist.
IV Fullerton, CA.
Dist. V Portland, OR.

7,688 couples encountered FY*

1983

FIRST WEEKENDS:

APR. 10th Columbia, S.C.
 SEPT. 18th Brazil, 1st South American weekend
 OCT. 2nd Fayetteville, NC.

First International Family Reunion, July 7-10, Pacific Lutheran Univ., Tacoma, WA.

Theme: "Celebration of Love"
 7,059 couples encountered FY*.

1984

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Chosen to Love"
 Dist. I Toledo, OH.
 Dist. II St. Charles, MO
 Dist. III Blair, NE.
 Dist. IV Thousand Oaks, CA.
 Dist. V Chico, CA.

4,778 couples encountered FY*

1985

FIRST WEEKENDS:

APR. 7th Reykjavik, Iceland

International Family Reunion, August 2-4, Northern Ill Univ., DeKalb, IL.
 Theme: "World of Love"

4,162 couples encountered FY*.

1986

FIRST WEEKENDS:

First European weekend in Sweden

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Share the Dream"
 Dist. I Ann Arbor, MI.
 Dist. II Seguin, TX.
 Dist. III Moorhead, MN.
 Dist. IV Fullerton, CA.
 Dist. V Cheney, WA.

3,086 couples encountered FY*

1987

FIRST WEEKENDS:

NOV. 8th Vivamo, Finland
 International Family Reunion, June 26-28, University of Denver, Denver, CO.
 Theme: "Into the World Together"

2,650 couples encountered FY*

1988

FIRST WEEKENDS:

NOV. 13th Gillette, WY.

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Our Wave of Love"
 Dist. I Waterloo, Ontario Can
 Dist. II Leavenworth, KS.
 Dist. III Albert Lea, MN.
 Dist. IV San Diego, CA.
 Dist. V Anchorage, AK.

2,189 couples encountered FY*

1989

FIRST WEEKENDS:

APR. 30th Adelaide, Australia
 International Family Reunion, August 4-6, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE.
 Theme: "Welcome to the Family of Love"
 1,711 couples encountered FY*

1990

NAR Executive Couples:

Dave & Ada Dorn-Lay, Dan & Judy Teuscher-Clergy

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Love in any Language"
 Dist. I Cleveland, OH.
 Dist. II Denton, TX.
 Dist. III Brooklyn Park, MN. Dist. IV Phoenix, AZ

ILME 800# initiated.

1,772 couples encountered FY*

1991

NAR Executive Couples:

Whitey & Carolyn Gail-Lay, Bruce & Ila Zellmer-Clergy

International Family Reunion, July 19-21, Saginaw Valley Univ., Saginaw, MI.
 Theme: "Love in any Language"

1,823 couples encountered FY*

1992

FIRST WEEKENDS:

FEB. 23rd Sydney, Australia
 MAR. 29th Kuusankoski, Finland
 APR. 26th Haikko, Finland

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Living the Dream"
 Dist. I St. Petersburg, Fl.
 Dist. II Chicago, IL.
 Dist. III Grand Island, NE.
 Dist. IV Pomona, CA.
 Dist. V Tacoma, WA.

1,884 couples encountered FY*

1993

FIRST WEEKENDS:

APR. Curitiba, Brazil
 International Family Reunion, July 23-25, Calgary Univ., Calgary, AB. Canada
 Theme: "Mountains of Love"

LME Starts the Presenter Emeritus recognition program.

First International Facilitator Couple, Jim & June Harvey

Nov., 800# logs its 1,000th call.

Sweden becomes the newest European district.

1,592 couples encountered FY*

1994

FIRST UNWEEKEND:

JUNE 28th Chicago/Rockford, IL

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Varied by District"
 Dist. I&II St. Louis, MO (The 1st combined)
 Dist. III Sioux City, IA.
 Dist. IV Westchester, CA.
 Dist. V Billings, MT.

LME forms an Ad Hoc Recruiting Committee

First Deepers are given in Brazil, Australia, Finland, and Norway.
 1,585 couples encountered FY*

1995

FIRST WEEKENDS:

JAN. 20th Denmark

New NAR Executive Couples: Oliver & Donna Nelson-Lay, Russ & Ann Hillman-Clergy

International Family Reunion, July 21-23, TCU, Fort Worth, TX
 Theme: "Love Crosses all Borders"

June 15th, Carolyn & Whitey Gail interview for "Focus on the Family" radio program.

New WEDS manual published

Awareness & Publicity committee established. The task is defined: More couples on, more weekends, in more places, then every before.

1575 couples encountered FY*

1996

FIRST Discovery Weekend:

MAY 19th Duram, N.C.

DISTRICT REUNIONS:

Theme: "Varied by district"
 Dist. I Toledo, OH.
 Dist. II Kansas City, MO.
 Dist. III Stevens Point, WI.
 Dist. V McMinnville, OR.

Inviting manual published

1,777 couples encountered FY*

1997

"A weekend of discovery, a lifetime of love." new slogan.

Finland hosts 10 year anniversary family reunion.

International Family Reunion, July 11-13, Washington Univ., St. Louis, MO.
 Theme: "Meet ME in St. Louis"

New inviting video tape produced.

1,623 couples encountered FY*

N. AMERICAN REGION

DISTRICT I The Carolinas

The 1989 history for North Carolina was submitted by Ed & Sue Boelte, the South by Herm & Carol Spitzer. Now combined as The Carolinas, the histories were revised for 2000 by David & Jean Fell.

In 1983, couples from Fayetteville involved with Catholic and Episcopal M.E. gathered to oversee the birth of Lutheran M.E. in North Carolina. Present were Buth & Marcia Cantrell; Dale & Nancy Press; and Pete & Carolyn Stromquist. Three couples returned from an LME Weekend in South Carolina in 1983, wrote information talks, and sent many couples off to invite for the Sept. 30-Oct. 2 weekend. This "self-seeded" area contacted national leadership to send the teams! They were Bob & Grace Schmeelcke, clergy from Delaware; Norm & Chery Huner, admins from Columbus, Ohio; Alan & Arline Fraser, mids from Maryland; and Don & Mary Hanson, rookies from Maryland. Thirty-two couples finished the weekend, including first local presenters, Paul & Connie Blanchette. As of 1989, North Carolina had held 10 weekends and encountered over 300 couples, and started to encourage and seed dreams far beyond Fayetteville. The unconditional loving of couples emulating Barrington Bunny inspired the whole district.

South Carolina LME began through the efforts of several local couples who had attended WWME Weekends and dreamed of bringing Lutheran Weekends to the state. They were Craig & Linda Versotille, Don & Marty Jo Gay; Bob & Emily Wiggins, Frank & Gail Paul; Ron & Pacita Luckey; Bob & Sandy Schauer; Dick & Betsy Heggt; Ralph & Jean Abreo; Lonnie & Leta Harris; and Herm &

Carol Spitzer. After meeting for 18 months, these couples scheduled the first Weekend for April 8-10, 1983, for 38 couples!

The South Carolina Area continued to sponsor about 2 weekends a year until combining in the '90s with the North Carolina Area. The faithful few, like Earl & Mary Sease, continue to attend reunions and are currently helping respread the word to western NC & Georgia.

These two areas combined in the '90s, with most Weekends being held in North Carolina. NC has also provided district leadership continuously for well over the last decade (Tom & Robin Cogan currently serve as District Clergy Contact couple). There are currently no presenters in SC; the Carolinas leadership in 2000 is Dennis & Kay Weaver (Lay, Vale NC), Joseph & Pat Tallent (Clergy, Garner NC), and Don & Amanda Ledbetter (APCC, Statesville NC). They usually sponsor two weekends a year in two different locations. The 1997 District Reunion was held in NC.

DISTRICT I Florida Area

The 1989 history, submitted by Dave & Gloria Rieck, revised for 2000 by Fells.

Dave & Gloria Rieck, encountered in Michigan in 1977, looked hard for an encountered community when they moved to Florida. They finally found enough WWME-encountered Lutherans to start meetings going in 1980 to plan the first Weekend May 15-17, 1981, near Sarasota, for 31 couples. Then National Executive couples, Jerry & Margy Strickler (clergy) and Bill & Nadine Gordon (lay), presented with Mike & Sue Carruthers, a mid-couple from Ontario and Florida's own brand new "rookie" presenters, Ted & Val Bricker.

The Riecks also convinced their pastor and wife (Paul & Kathie Winemiller) to attend a WWME Weekend, and they became the first Clergy Contacts with the Brickers as first Lay Contact Couple for the new

Area. By the late '80s the Sarasota/Venice lovers had reached out to have 10 active love circles meeting monthly. The Area hosted the District Meeting in Venice in 1988.

By way of an update, Florida weekends have continued, usually twice a year, largely through the efforts of presenters Marty & Lois Light (3rd set), who have served in many area & District leadership capacities for years; Mickey & June Mundy (2nd set), great East Coast transplants who currently serve as APCCs; and Al & Sue Pfeiffer, as well as many dedicated lovers like Doug & Katie Diehl, who served as the most recent lay contacts. Over the years Florida has reached out to other areas, notably Georgia and South Carolina, with great love and encouragement.

As of 2000, the area leadership consists of Bob & Grace Schmeelcke (clergy contacts, though no longer presenting weekends), and Mickey & June Munday (APCCs).

DISTRICT I Georgia Area (now retired Area):

The 1989 history, submitted by Snuff & Lorraine Grimes, revised for 2000 by Fells.

After attending a WWME Weekend in Atlantic City in 1975, the Grimes moved to Georgia and became active in the Catholic community there. The first Lutheran area board was formed in 1977 with Grimes as Lay Contacts; Duyane & Kay Cochran as Atlanta Zone Coordinators; Tom & Karen Thomas, Registration; Mike & Beverly Thornton, Finance; Bill & Ann Walker, Weekend Coordinators; John & Lynne Wehrspann, Supplies; and Jim & Sandy Sampson, Information. The first Weekend was June 6-8, 1980, presented by Toledo's John & Kris Burow; Florida's Felix & Janet Palmer; New York City's Larry & Barbara O'Neill; and the Grimes. Finding that the Episcopalians were holding a Weekend at the same time in the same hotel, they joined together for mutual

prayer. Georgia helped start love circles in Tennessee and helped kick off LME Weekends in South Carolina.

Sadly, by the end of the '80s Georgia as an Area was struggling, being held together by only a handful of stalwart lovers like the Kearses. By vote of the District Board, the Area was retired, but as more and more Lutherans pour into cities like Atlanta, and more couples call for information and assistance from Georgia, we all pray that LME "will rise again" in Georgia.

DISTRICT I Michigan Area

The 1989 history, submitted by Dan & Judy Christiansen, revised for 2000 by the Christiansens (and Fells are delighted to report that the Christiansens are alive and well, now retired from full-time work, and serving as 3rd set presenters and District I's Presenting Couple Coordinators. The District wouldn't be the same without them!).

Michigan was the 13th Area created within LME, as a result of Dan & Judy Teuscher encouragement of Will & Barb Cabble and Warren & Susan Hentschel. Founding couples Don & Karen Kurtz and John & Sally Duenow sent long-distance love from Cheney WA. When Eric & Kathryn Webber from Waterloo-Kitchner came forward as the first clergy contact couple, Michigan could finally form as an Area, while helping to seed Ontario. July 15-17, 1977, the first Michigan Weekend was held in Warren MI, with the following presenters: Webbers as clergy, Duenows as admin; Cabbles as mids, and Hentschels as rookie presenters. The joy-filled couples found a large picture of the laughing Jesus hanging over the presenters' table when they returned from the 90/90. Presenters on every Michigan Weekend since then have signed the back of that picture.

Michigan hosted the District I reunion in June 1986 in Ann Arbor, a call to "Share the Dream," and then hosted the ILME Family reunion in

Saginaw July 19-21, 1991 with the title "Love in Any Language." The keynote speaker was Dr. Shang IK Moon. How appropriate, given the geography of Michigan, for the final presentation to be entitled "In the Palm of God's Hand."

Saginaw hosted a Deeper in 1994, and in inimitable Michigan style drafted local clergy Bill & Janis Hessler to read the clergy presenters' talks because they had difficulty with their plane connections from Florida!

Through downs and ups, Michigan has been a source of loving inspiration to the rest of District I. They have enjoyed strong presenting team strength and established creative and foundational procedures for informing, inviting, and educating the pre-encountered. Functioning as one large area, Michigan divides the state into four operational zones for many years, having its own local boards, and hosting weekends in these different locations. As of 2000, the leadership consists of: Fred & Barb Roush (lay), Bill & Janis Hessler (clergy), and Bob & Karen Delanoy (APCC).

DISTRICT I Mid-Atlantic Area

By Skip & Vicki Schempp, 1989.

Our first Weekend was November 25-27, 1977, and we had them almost every other month for a number of years. Skip and I made the second Weekend in January 1978. We started having four a year in 1983 and 1984, and then 3 weekends in 1985. An energetic Reading, PA, area got the Weekends going again in 1988, and the two centers of Reading and greater Philadelphia alternated sites, hosting 1 or 2 weekends a year since then. Mid-Atlantic hosted a Deeper Weekend in 1997, and two District Board meetings, in 1998 and 2000. The last District I Reunion held in the area was June 25-27, 1982 at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA.

Interfaith activities was regular in the mid-90s, with Catholic and Jewish expressions.

Current area leaders consist of the Schempps as lay contacts and Mike & Debbie Maxwell as APCCs. The two centers of couples are about four hours apart. National Capital presenters have augmented the Area's resources for a number of years.

DISTRICT I National Capital Area

The 1989 history, submitted by Jim & June Harvey, has been revised for 2000 by current Lay Contacts Tom & Ina Berkey.

National Capital traces its roots to 1978 when Bob & Colleen Norrgard, a presenting couple, moved from Minnesota to Northern Virginia. They enlisted the help of couples like Jim & June Harvey to prepare for the first LME Weekend in July 1979, attended by 36 couples. A newsletter named "Capital Encounters" has been produced quarterly ever since.

LME thrived in the '80s. Weekends in Virginia expanded to Maryland sites, and 868 couples were encountered in that decade. There were community events like picnics, plays, potlucks, and square dances; an interfaith dialogue with 6 faith communities. The Area hosted a mini convention nicknamed "Tacoma East" in conjunction with the National Reunion in Tacoma Washington in 1983.

The '90s were a decade of "holding our own." Weekends were held three times a year, encountering 452 couples. The Area hosted a "workshoppers' workshop" in Springfield, for representatives from around the country plus 2 from Finalnd and 1 each from Iceland and Norway. Just imagine praying the Lord's Prayer in 4 languages. In 1993, the Area created a "Lutheran Clergy Testimonial" as a recruiting tool, and in '97 we hosted a District I Board meeting at cherry blossom time.

The National Capital Area faces the new decade with 3 goals in mind: 1) increase the number of couples encountered; 2) recruit additional presenting couples; and 3) pray without ceasing that God may use each of us to

invigorate LME across our area and around the world.

This Area has surely been a source of district/national leadership and expertise since the incorporation of Call to be Family, reaching out with love far beyond the borders of Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. Fred & Marilyn Illick (Maryland) served as previous Clergy Contact Couple for the district, after returning to LME following their retirements from full-time preaching and teaching. Jake & June Rabatin (Virginia) served as DPCCs for many years before succeeding Bill & Marian Hooper as NAR Presenting Couple Coordinators. Besides the Berkeys, current executive leaders are Mark & Char Walters (clergy), and Alan & Arline Fraser (APPC).

DISTRICT I New York/New England

Submitted by David & Jean Fell

With Harold & Sandy Wheeler returning to upstate NY from far-afield places like Texas and Florida, and erstwhile LME presenters Jeff & Karen Jackson very active in non-Lutheran M.E. in Connecticut, and long-time clergy presenters Ted & Jane Guthrie sort of in between them in Ontario, it made sense to create a barbell-shaped Area called New York/New England. Both east and west “bells” have had centers of presenters and hosted Weekends (including one small one in the Wheeler’s gorgeous Bed ‘n Breakfast!), with the Guthries providing valuable continuity and encouragement from the “bar” – hmmm, from the bar?

The Area has hosted district meetings at both sites, but continues to struggle to bring on board sufficient presenting team strength and community support to avoid having just a handful of couples with too many hats.

DISTRICT I Connecticut

Connecticut’s LME was started by Jeff & Karen Jackson, transplants from California, who arrived in the Constitution State in 1985. The closest LME communities were in Syracuse

(NY) and Reading (PA). Advice from the “top” suggested there weren’t enough Lutherans in CT to sustain weekends and that the Jackson’s should “bloom and grow where they were planted.” Bloom they did, serendipitously linking-up with the last remaining Episcopalian circle/spiral of 7 couples in Western CT. In 1988, Karen & Jeff became the Area Lay Contact Couple for CT Episcopal ME, helping to revitalize EME in CT.

God had a plan for LME in CT. Enough Lutheran couples were encountered on Episcopal weekends to form a base of support for LME in CT. So, with perfect timing, our Lord sent Dave & Ada Dorn (the Jackson’s were on the same 1977 deeper weekend with the Dorn’s in San Jose, CA) to New York City on a temporary job assignment and connected these two old warrior couples. With the Dorn’s encouragement and great help from the DPPC’s, Jake & June Rabatin, the first CT weekend was held in November of 1993. There were 25 couples on the initial weekend—4 presenters (Dave & Ada, Pastor Don & Carolyn Weiss, Harold & Sandy Wheeler from Syracuse, and Ed & Sue Bolte), and 19 Lutheran/Lutheran couples (one from NY, one from MA, two from NJ and 17 from CT). Prayer couples and weekend supplies, banners, tissues, etc., were graciously provided by many loving Episcopal expression lovers.

Fall in CT/New England is a glorious, colorful mosaic that celebrates God’s gift of turning leaves for all to behold, so Connecticut hosted two District Board meetings in Autumn. The first was in September of 1995 and the second in October of 1997 and it included an interfaith meeting of Episcopal, Catholic, and Lutherans from the CT area.

So far (as of 9/1/00) God has blessed us with eight Lutheran Weekends. Geographically, CT is a small state and has less than 100 Lutheran churches (ELCA and Missouri Synod), but it is filled with a “Whale of a lot of Love.” To celebrate our ecumenical roots and ties with our

Episcopal brothers & sisters in Christ, as well as celebrate marriage, our motto is “Connect in Connecticut.”

DISTRICT I North Central Ohio

The area now known as North Central Ohio of Lutheran Marriage Encounter was established by a personal letter to Don & Karen Kurtz, a contact couple from Cheney Washington by Quin & Helena Buechner in March 1976. Our first official act as an area was to establish a committee to set up giving weekends. In those days, to be considered to be an area, you had to have at least a Clergy couple and also 2 other presenting couples in close geographical area to be considered, as well as having enough couples to support giving a weekend. Our first Clergy Couple was Dave & Karen Schilling and our co-Contact couples were Quin & Helena Buechner and Bill & Cheri Kirchner and all three couples attended a Deeper weekend in Chicago in June 1976. Also going to that deeper were 2 other couples, Don & Ruth White and also Jim & Noreen Miller.

Our first weekend was held in May 1976, although we do not have the exact date, location, or the number of couples that attended. The titles of the talks that were presented were:

Rookies: Encounter with Self, Openness to God’s Plan, Confidence, and Recruitment.

Middle: Intro, Marriage in Modern World, Mat. Spirit and Rookie

Admin: Focus, Dialogue, Parable, God’s Plan, O & A, Finance, Marriage & Its Graces.

All these talks were written by the couples but were work-shopped by a local Catholic Couple as they had the outline and were giving weekends.

The registration fee to reserve your spot was \$15. The usual asking price for a weekend cost was determined to be between \$90 and \$125. The weekends had limits as to the number of Clergy (5) and Anniversary couples (3) that could attend and had a minimum of 15 couples for a weekend to allowed to go.

Our area was originally the Lutheran Expression Northern Ohio Marriage Encounter area (N.O.M.E.). One catch phrase that was used is "to N.O.M.E is to Love ME". What a bunch of crazy lovers then??

Our designation as an area became official on January 1, 1977 with the other areas in Lutheran Marriage Encounter: Los Angeles, Minnesota, Orange County, Northern California, Eugene, Seattle, Spokane, Phoenix and Ohio. So, we were the first area that later became District 1.

By June, the interest was so strong and activity was high, that Kickoffs were scheduled in Toledo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Columbus.

The second weekend was held in August, 1976 and as it was reported, "we feel we are on a snowball rolling down the hill and are becoming part of the snowball instead of staying on top of it" They wanted to schedule several weekends before the year was out in Youngstown and also east of Cleveland.

This area has grown significantly and has been as large as covering the geographic area of west to Toledo, south to Columbus, and east to Pittsburgh before dividing up and forming several areas. By 1979, we had divided the North Central Ohio area into 2 zones, Cleveland and Akron and these 2 zones were to support the area Board to present weekends. From 1979 to 1982, there were weekends scheduled every month with only 2 cancellations.

The Area Lay Contact Couple And the Clergy Contact Couple make up the Area Contact Couple Team. The following is the listing of these couples from the foundation of our area.

Lay Contact Couples:

Quin & Helena Buechner 76-77, Bob & Joy Dill 78-79, Keith & Muriel Klafehn 80-81, George & Margot Fretz 82, Pat & George Kastner 82-84, Harry & Claudia Arnold 85-87, David & Andra Nenstiel 88-89, David & Jean

Fell 90-91, Bruce & Mary Ann Breslin 91-94, Duffy & Nan Guthrie 95-97, Bob & Renae Schondel 98-2000

Clergy Contact Couples:

Dave & Karen Schilling 76-77, Ron & Martine Unger 78-79, John & Pat Eiwen 80, Del & Shirley Keltto 80-82, Fred & Jean Michelson 83-84, Bill & Helene Pearch 85-86, Bob & Shirley Sorensen 87-88 Don & Mary Ann Pentz 89-95

This Area hosted a District Reunion in June 1980 at John Carroll University. The Theme of the reunion was "We are one in Love" and the theme song was "You'll know we are Christians by Our Love".

This Area has hosted several Deeper Weekends going back through 1979 with the Latest in 1999.

This area has also been instrumental with District and National Leadership.

In 1980, Bob & Joy Dill were elected as District 1 Lay Contact Couple, Dave & Karen Schilling AS District 1 Clergy Contact and Don & Ruth White as National Team Coordinators. More Recently, David & Jean Fell were District Area Lay Contacts from 1996-1999, and the Current District Lay Couple of Bruce & Mary Ann Breslin. Other National Staff Couples currently are Nan & Duffy Guthrie as Resource Couple.

This Area also has had a strong following and involvement in a Retreat since 1979. A completely separate event from a Marriage Encounter Weekend, a weekend retreat is for Encountered couples that want to gather and continue in building and sustaining the Weekend. This area has held a Retreat since 1979 and has not missed a year.

The following is a list of Presenters that have presented in the North Central Ohio Area:

Quin & Helena Buechner, Dave & Karen Schilling, Ron & Martine Unger, John & Pat Eiwen, Del &

Shirley Keltto, Fred & Jean Michelson, Bill & Helene Pearch, Bob & Shirley Sorensen, Don & Mary Ann Pentz, Bob & Joy Dill, Keith & Muriel Klafehn, Pat & George Kastner, Harry & Claudia Arnold, David & Andra Nenstiel, David & Jean Fell, Bruce & Mary Ann Breslin, Duffy & Nan Guthrie, Kevin & Raye Guynn, Bob & Nancy Erdman, Phil & Nancy Unger, Dave & Cathy McCullom, Kenn & Joyce Oerkfitz, Bob & Linda Lancashire, Tod & Carol Charlton, Jim & Noreen Miller, Bob & Deb Michaels, Rob & Mona Mims, Carl & Dee Zahrtes, Dana & Lorain Stuckey, Lou & Linda Harris, Don & Ruth White, Jim & Nancy Booker, David & Billie Mack, Bill & Nadine Gordon, John & Lu Polder, Stan & Andrea Kramer, Bill & Mary Clancy, Les & Nancy Corneth, Dave & Betty Sidebottom, Mike & Eileen Herron, Bob & Renae Schondel, Steve & Sue Rufe

DISTRICT I Ohio/Ohio Valley

Submitted by Chuck & Doris Anderson, retired presenters.

The first weekend was a November, 1976 outreach from Ohio/North Central. We traveled monthly for 1-1/2 years to meet with that community, which included Don & Ruth White and Bill & Nadine Gordon. In 1977, we joined John & Carol Goodrich and Dave & Gretchen Risch on a Deeper Weekend. We became the Area's first lay contacts, with the Risches becoming clergy contacts. The Area hosted the International Convention held at Capital University in 1981, and an international Deeper. Al & Erlene Sager became the international clergy contacts (serving with the Gordons). The Area enjoyed a succession of excellent leadership, ending with Ken & Shirley Schepler as admin on the last Weekend hosted by the Area in 1989. We presented over 60 weekends and served on the new outline committee in 1983 with the Sagers.

DISTRICT I Ohio/South-Central

Submitted by David & Jean Fell

This is the newest Area of District I, voted upon in 1998. Ever since Columbus (as the Ohio/Valley Area) had first reached out to Dayton and Cincinnati in the early '80s, core love circles had continued, mostly under the personal encouragement of Gates & Kathy Smith of Cincinnati. District leaders Don & Carolyn Weiss and the Ohio/Toledo Area mentored the growing group when they were ready to hold weekends once again after a few years' hiatus. This mentoring continued under District leadership until Bill & Kaye Morrissey, back as presenters in LME after many years, offered to serve as Clergy Contacts, and the local lovers raised up a wonderful core of leadership, including Glen Brueggemeier & Viki Beck as previous Lay Contacts. Struggles continue to pull the diverse lovers together in this wide-spread Area. Steve & Karen Mahaffey, encountered in '98 or '99, "deepered" in 1999, now serve as lay contacts. Steve attends seminary at Trinity; Karen grew up an "E.K.," daughter of Jim and Kathie Hauiesen, who were 3rd set presenters for Ohio Valley for many years.

Through all this, South-Central shines as an example of district-to-district cooperation and how the dream can remain alive.

DISTRICT I Ohio/Toledo

The 1989 history, submitted by Mike & Eileen Herron, revised for 2000 by David & Jean Fell.

The Herrons were encountered in 1976 on a Catholic Weekend, and attended a Catholic Deeper in Toledo soon after. There they met the only other local Lutheran future-presenters, Jim & Noreen Miller. While remaining active in WWME in Toledo, the Herrons were persuaded by John & Kris Burow when they moved from Missouri to start attending monthly meetings in Cleveland to get LME started in northern Ohio. Even though

Eileen got carsick after only 10 minutes, they made that commitment, along with their best friends, Skip & Mary Harouff, a Catholic couple they called their "right arms." With the help of Cleveland's Don & Ruthe White and Quin & Helena Buechner, the first Toledo Weekend took place February 4-6, 1977. Presenters were John & Barb Riley, admin from Texas; Dave & Karen Schilling, clergy; Bill & Chari Krichner, mid; and Lou & Linda Lou Harris, rookie presenters. The second weekend brought the Herrons on board as rookie presenters to the 39 couple weekend! The first Area leadership included the Herrons as lay contact, John & Kris Burows as clergy contact, and Chris & Lee Anne Henry as APCC.

Over the years, Toledo lovers have hosted a variety of district meetings and reunions, most recently in 1996. The "rewrites" have taken their toll, but current leaders John & Lynn Lehnert (lay) and Jon & Bonnie Bell (clergy) continue to live the dream.

DISTRICT I Ontario

Submitted by David & Jean Fell.

Ontario has a long history with LME, interfaith activities, and ups and downs. Now is a time of slender harvest as the decreasing team community completes the rewriting. Most of the active community resides in the western parts of Ontario, and weekends usually take place in Stratford, with support from the Michigan and Ohio/NorthCentral areas. Current executive leadership includes Tom & Joanne Costtick and Klaus & Linda Springer as co-lay contacts; Dick & Linda Holm as clergy contacts, and Bev & Yvonne Strucke as APCCs.

DISTRICT I Western Pennsylvania (previously called Tri-State)

The 1989 history, submitted by Al & Bert Rettig, revised for 2000 by current Lay Contacts Fred & Julie Schamber.

Tri-State was an appropriate name for this Area at its inception, because it covered the Eastern part of Ohio (notably Youngstown/Warren),

Western Pennsylvania, and the pandhandle of West Virginia. The first Weekend resulted from months of exciting and long-distance planning with Ohio/North Central, and was held December 3-5, 1976. Presenters were Dick & Kathie Thorpe (3rd set, AZ); Don & Ruth White (2nd set, NorthCentral; Will & Barb Cabble (1st set MI), and David & Carol Reynolds (clergy, CA). This was soon followed by the first Weekend to be held in what eventually became the most popular site, Butler PA, June 10-12, 1977. Geff & Dee Caesar served as the first Lay Contact couple, and Landis & Judy Coffman were first Clergy Contact. Dan & Nancy Sander and Fred & Jean Michelson were also very key clergy leaders.

Since the Caesars, the following have served Lay Contacts: Bill & Cheri Kirchner (Youngstown OH), Bill & Linda Miller (E. Palestine OH), Rick & Linda Cable (E. Palestine OH), Ron & Robin McKnight (Butler PA), Don & Karen Steele (Pittsburgh), David & Jean Fell (Wexford PA), Larry & Kathy Madden (Butler PA), Marlin & Karen Boltz (Cabot PA), and currently Fred & Julie Schamber (Murrysville PA).

By way of an update: in the '90s, Tri-State went through its struggles along with most other District areas. Some outreach took place towards its east and west boundaries, and coordination continued with neighboring NorthCentral and Mid-Atlantic Areas. The first weekend at Camp Sequanota in Jennerstown to the east was October 1996, and became an annual event. The Area hosted a number of District meetings, enjoyed an annual family campout at Camp Lutherlyn for many, many years, and sent its couples to District Reunions. Its most successful "by-product" of LME in this Area has been core couple Al & Bert Rettig's dream to create an inter-denominational, one-day Pre-Cana program. Most presenters are Lutheran encountered couples.

In the Spring of 1999, when both Lutherans and Presbyterians faced

small Weekend attendance, they decided to combine attendees under PME sponsorship. An Interfaith Council began in the summer of 1999 with representatives from these two groups plus Catholic and Methodist faith expressions. They published an Ecumenical M.E. brochure that listed all weekend dates and contacts, and provided an information booth at a local community day. Radio & TV spots are next in the interfaith dream!

DISTRICT II Central Illinois

Submitted by Joel & Carol DuFrain, 1989

The Central Illinois Area Love Circle of Lutheran Marriage Encounter began in the fall of 1978. Prior to that time all M.E. couples were a part of the Catholic Community of M.E., which began having monthly community meetings in the fall of 1976. This was a large group comprised of couples of many faiths.

The coordinators of this Catholic community and the couples instrumental in bringing the first Catholic weekend to East Central Illinois were: Jim & Nancy Hebel, Neoga, Illinois and Herman and Karen Lukow of Mattoon, Illinois. The whole community worked together to support the first Catholic weekend in 1978 at the Holiday Inn in Charleston, (12 miles from Mattoon). It was a successful full weekend, and they went on to have several more until the weekends were moved south to Effingham where they are still held.

A handful of Lutheran couples were encouraged by Dan & Judy Teuscher of St. Louis, to begin their own community with a goal of a Lutheran weekend in Central Illinois. Thanks to the St. Louis Reach-Out, many helping hands from the Catholic community and others, the first Lutheran out-reach weekend became a reality on February 16-18, 1979, held in Charleston, Illinois at the same facility where the first Catholic weekend was held.

At approximately the same time, a U.C.C. community had formed and they held a reach-out weekend at Eastern Illinois University, in Charleston.

The presenting couples on this first L.M.E. weekend were: Rich & JoAnne Polka of St. Louis; Rev. Lee & Phyllis Zabrocki of Arlington Heights; Ken & Ann Larson of Woodridge and Dan & Jan Clymer of Ft. Wayne, In.

Joel and Carol DuFrain were the first coordinators of the Love Circle in Mattoon. Since the Mattoon – Central Illinois community was not at that time an official “Area,” but did coordinate the three weekends held there, they prefer to be called coordinators rather than the official “Contact Couple” for the area. (Once Decatur started having weekends and their own local teams, Central Illinois was designated an “Area.”) The DuFrain’s are still coordinating the monthly Love Circle meetings in Mattoon.

One humorous (?) event occurred after the first weekend. We were a bit concerned when we discovered that the chef who would be preparing all the meals for the weekend had quit on Tuesday. The manager and staff assured the coordinators that everything would go as planned. Apparently, this was not so. The food was a bit strange and scarce from what we found out after the weekend. When asked, “How was the Chocolate Mousse?” one couple replied “Oh, is that what that was?” Most of the couples enjoyed the weekend even though the food was not the best.

The most unusual (or is it?) fact about M.E. weekends in East Central Illinois is that the first Catholic weekend was held at the Holiday Inn in Charleston; the first Lutheran weekend was held at the Holiday Inn in Charleston; and the first Methodist weekend of 1989 was held at the Charleston Motor Inn (formerly the Holiday Inn of Charleston). The Mattoon-Charleston communities are willing to try for “four!”

During our three Lutheran weekends in the Mattoon area, (February 16-18, 1978; October 17-19, 1980; and October 23-25, 1981) approximately 95 couples were encountered. All three of these

weekends were reach-out weekends given graciously by the St. Louis area, and what a reach-out it was. The couples on those three weekends came from 35 different towns and cities in Central Illinois. There were seven clergy couples encountered and Central Illinois was privileged to have four team couples come off those weekends.

After the 1981 weekend, the community felt they had saturated the area somewhat and wanted to “pass on” the gift of having a weekend. It was suggested to the blossoming Decatur community, (Many of whom had gone on the Mattoon weekend) that they approach the St. Louis area about a reach-out. In October of 1982, Decatur had their first weekend and in 1984 Central Illinois was declared an official “Area” of Lutheran Marriage Encounter. Decatur has since passed it on to the Peoria area, Quincy and Champaign. Wonderful things happen when we “pass it on!”

Central Illinois Update

Looking back over the history of Lutheran Marriage Encounter in Central Illinois: Weekends/Couple Relationships/Love Circle/Board Meetings/Planning Sessions could best be described like the flowing of a river. Sometimes there are sharp turns, rough waters and large rocks to navigate around when a weekend is postponed or only 2 couples show up for a Love Circle and TIME robs us of our 10/10 time. At other times it flows along quietly and peaceful when couples commit to loving tasks and hosting information talks. At other times there are wide spots of pure beauty lined with trees, flowers and green grass like the JOY experienced at Sing-off at the close of a weekend.

Submitted by Lloyd & Patsy Schumacher

Decatur Love Circle started in February 1981 with the help of Joel & Carol DuFrain from Mattoon. Jerry & Gladys Geske from Decatur were the first leaders. The Decatur Lovers are still holding monthly gatherings in the couple’s homes. Other areas are also

involved with monthly community meetings: Champaign, Mahomet, Bloomington/Normal, Lexington, Peoria/Washington, Springfield, Quincy, Mattoon, Jacksonville, Pana and Mackinaw. Some of these Communities are from other expressions of M.E. and the groups are interdenominational.

Submitted by Lloyd & Patsy Schumacher

The year is 2000 now and many couples have been encountered and moved on here in Central Illinois. At the present time we are an out-reach area of St. Louis again, as we have only one presenting couple living in this area now. We are the authors of this part of the history: Richard and Bev Foels. We were encountered in Springfield in 1996, and have presented weekends in Central Illinois and Missouri. The previous information was copied from information given to us in notebooks we received from Lloyd and Patsy Schumacher. The Schumacher's have had many Joy Jobs through the years and are currently the registration couple for our area.

The Peoria Love Circle is strong again. Decatur seems to be struggling again, as does Springfield with finding couples to continue to stay active in the Love Circle. There are several other active Love Circles here in Central Illinois too. We have been having weekends rotating between Springfield and Peoria for the past 4 or 5 years now.

Many of the area couples have enjoyed going to the Lake of the Ozarks every year in January to a Romantic Weekend Getaway. We enjoy informal sessions with other encountered couples that provide opportunities to grow in our relationship. This weekend away from home allows us to relax after the busy holidays plus have the pleasure of being a prayer couple for a couple on the weekend being held there at the same time.

Submitted by Richard & Bev Foels

Central Illinois Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends

1979-1989 21 weekends, 578 couples

1990-2000 12 weekends, 232 couples

Total encountered couples 810 couples

DISTRICT II Illinois/Chicago Area

Submitted by Ken & Ann Larson, 1989

In 1976, Lutheran Marriage Encounter in the greater Chicago area was just a dream in the hearts and minds of Mike & Jeanette Jeffery and Bob & Paula Long. Shortly thereafter, Ken & Ann Larson, Dick & Teddie Knapp, Ed & Lee Gicla and others joined that dream and grand plans were talked about very often. Yet there was no date for the first weekend. The great schemes for spreading LME through-out the Chicago area seemed so attainable but there weren't enough teams. Then in 1977, Tom & Cathy Schadt moved into the area from Phoenix where LME weekends already were being held. Things became exciting as a date for an October weekend was set. The culmination of all everyone had hoped for was close at hand. Then came the word we wouldn't have the necessary teams ready and the October weekend went down the drain. At first everyone was crushed but quickly realized there was more to having a weekend than setting a date. More realistically, with Tom & Cathy Schadt guiding the rest with their experience and know-how, the first weekend was reset for February, 1978. The team couples were ready and the weekend with 34 couples was held in Elmhurst, IL. The team couples were Tom & Cathy Schadt, Admin; Dick & Jan Fishel, Middle (Phoenix); Mike and Jeannette Jeffery, Rookie; and David & Judy Bugh, Clergy. The second of 6 weekends held in 1978 was held in April with 33 couples. The teams were Dick & Bonnie Larson from Minneapolis, Felix & Janet Palmer from Florida, Ken & Ann Larson and David & Judy Bugh. It was here Bonnie Larson gave a stage whisper to the "perfectionist", Ken Larson, that the handout he was distributing to the couples in Encounter with Self was "Dulcinea" and not "Aldonza". He then had to run red-faced to the other end of the

motel to get the correct one while the couples laughed. Later on in the year, Tom Schadt, who was generally tense at the beginning of the weekend, was running around the motel looking for a couple who wasn't present when the roll was called. He was looking for room 252 (which didn't exist) and an Amish couple from Podunk, IA, Mike & Cathy Houston (who were imaginary). The hosting and registration couples thought Tom needed to relax a little and when he discovered he had been taken, he did. Mike & Cathy Houston, however, did have a great weekend and have attended several reunions. Their first national one was in Minneapolis. They made it to a district reunion in Kansas and were quite excited as they attended the celebration of 10 years of LME in Chicago, 1986. They hope to see a lot of old friends in Lincoln. At the end of 1978, Mike and Jeanette Jeffery, the first contact couple turned over their job to Ken & Ann Larson. Six months later, David & Judy Bugh, the first clergy contact couple turned over their job to Hollis & Jane Bishop. During 1979, 10 full weekends were held and in 1980 12 full weekends were held. Records indicate there were a minimum of 12 couples on a waiting list each weekend and couples had to schedule their weekend 2 to 3 weekends in the future. It was during 1980, the Chicago area reached out to Rockford by scheduling 2 weekends in that area. Chicago also indirectly helped Fort Wayne by being near enough for those couples to attend weekends. Two of those couples, Tom & Sandra Ballard and Paul & Judy Borg were among the first presenting couples in the Fort Wayne area. These first few years were filled with excitement and enthusiasm. Everyone was certain with this kind of beginning we would surely change the world.

Illinois/Chicago Update

Submitted By Ralph & Judi Golnick

In 1982, the year we were encountered, we managed to get involved with Marriage Encounter in a big way. Shortly after our weekend Ken & Ann Larson asked us to become presenters.

Tom & Sandra Ballard were then the Lay Contact Couple for the Chicago Area. At that time the Chicago and Rockford areas were going strong with several weekends a year. There were enough presenters to hold a weekend a month. During those early years Chicago and Rockford freely interchanged presenting couples.

Jon & Rhonda Kalkwarf soon emerged as leaders in the Chicago Area. They were the APCC couple in Chicago when Judi and I gave our first weekend. And Russ & Donna Kelly were the APCC couple for Rockford.

We would be remiss if we didn't share the following with all of you. Our dear NAR Clergy Couple, Dan & Judy Teuscher, were the Clergy Couple on the weekend after which we were asked to be presenters. And on our Deeper they had been the clergy presenters. Judy Teuscher had a beautiful line in one of her talks that struck Ralph who then lovingly lifted it and placed it into one of our talks.

Well, as luck would have it, on the first weekend we presented, Dan & Judy were the Clergy presenters. Ralph was shocked and became very nervous when he realized that Judy would soon hear her very good line lying there in his talk. Not to worry though. She didn't even blink. She merely said, "As Ralph said earlier," then she repeated the same line. That did teach Ralph not to put exactly the same wording into a talk when there might be a chance to do a weekend with that person in the future.

Tom & Sandy Ballard eventually moved on, as did several of the other couples who were in the Chicago Area from its beginning. We also lost our Clergy contact at this time. A new couple, Mark & Cindy Novak, stepped in after the Ballards left. Unfortunately, they only were able to stay a short time and moved on. After Mark & Cindy left a couple by the name of Rick & Judy Wournma, who came to the Chicago Area from California, became the lay contact. They were supercharged and had a lot of great ideas that they had brought with them.

During those early years we were the only first set couple in the two areas and, as a result, we gave nine weekends before we wrote up to the 2nd set. The next couple to assume the Lay Contact Couple position was Steve and Judy Converse. They workshopped our 2nd set talks, and struggled with writing up themselves. They wanted to move up to Admin, but they lovingly put that off to workshop our talks.

After the Converses, we took on the Lay Contact loving task. The Kalkwarf's moved up to District II Lay Contact from APCC in the Chicago Area. That position was then assumed by Royce & Rhonda Heaney.

1993 – For one of the nine weekends that we presented, we had only 10 couples registered. The Chicago board had thought that the District would not let that weekend be put on. But, to our surprise, when Steve called Jim & Bev Bridge, our District II Lay Contact, for advice, he was told to let it go. As it turned out, the weekend ended with nine couples—three of them became presenters. They were Chris & Sue Markgraf, Nick & Gina Rogosinski, and Rich & Jan Schleier.

1995 – Steve Converse had a job change that required their family to move to the East Coast. The last weekend we presented with Steve & Judy was in Rockford.

Shortly thereafter both Area Presenting Couple Coordinators in Chicago and Rockford stepped down leaving a big hole in the leadership team.

Fortunately, John & Barb Stadfield, who lived in the Rockford area, stepped up and became the Rockford Lay Contact Couple. John & Connie Heins were then (and still are) the Rockford Clergy Contact.

The Chicago area being without a Clergy contact for many years relied on input from the District Clergy Contact and some help from John & Connie Heins. The Lord sent us Roger & Carole Willer who agreed to assume that loving task.

1997 – The first weekend we presented with Carole & Roger Willer

was in February, 1997.

During the last few years of the century, there was a general decline in enthusiasm. Several presenting couples deselected and the ranks thinned down to two couples in the Rockford Area, and four in the Chicago Area. As a result those of us who were left were required to do additional work. God did answer our prayers and sent Ruth Anne & Alan Wheeler to the Chicago area who took some of the load off of our shoulders. They became the Lay Contact couple so that we could concentrate on building up the presenting couple strength once again.

2000 – Sadly we recently bid adieu to the Wheelers who moved to Minnesota following a job opportunity. But waiting in the wings was our current Lay Contact couple Dave & Jean Dobbstein.

The Chicago Area is still alive and kicking. We have three very dedicated presenting couples who want nothing more than to let our "baby" stand up and start walking on its own again. To do that we have resumed promoting LME in the Chicago area Lutheran Churches—this time using the new *Worldwide ME Inviting & Publicity Program 2000*.

When the "new outlines" were adopted, many couples, who had worked long and hard, chose to deselect rather than rewrite.

We miss them. We ask that you pray for the couples named below. These couples have passed our way as presenters, and are no longer giving weekends (in Chicago). If you know any of these couples, please thank God for giving us the opportunity to have known them. Ken & Cathy Schumacher, Royce & Rhonda Heaney, Chris & Sue Markgraf, Steve & Judy Converse, Russ & Donna Kelly, John & Barb Stadfield, Rich & Jan Schleier, Jon & Rhonda Kalkwarf, Herb & Ann Priester, Bob & Ellen Maxwell, Gordon & Grace Hendrickson, Ruth Anne & Alan Wheeler, Ken & Ann Larson, Mark & Cindy Novak, Tom & Cathy Schadt, Rick & Judi Wournma, Vic & Pam Legner.

DISTRICT II**Indiana/Ft. Wayne Area**

Submitted by Dave & Linda Erdman, 1989

The Ft. Wayne Catholic Marriage Encounter organization supported our newsletter for one full year and helped us organize a community. Our first weekend was January 25-27, 1980, at the Marriott in Ft. Wayne. The first presenting couples were Paul & Judy Borg, Don & Jo Murphy, Jim & Nancy Booker and Lou & Linda Harris. Dan & Jan Clymer were contact couple before we even started any Lutheran weekends. In June, 1979, Don & Jo Murphy joined them as co-contact couple. Earl & Pauline Fritz were the Clergy Contact Couple. Some unusual events included: the Catholic expression financially supported our newsletter for one year, the Catholic expression offered to pay for our first weekend and buy all our supplies. We borrowed a sheriff's bus to go to a convention and it broke down on the way home. Dan & Jan Clymer gave an angel outreach weekend to Mattoon, IL on February 16-18, 1979. On April 15-17, 1983, Steve & Linda Love, Paul & Judy Borg: Karl & Mabel Slack and Jim & Nancy Booker gave an outreach weekend to Columbus, IN.

DISTRICT II**Missouri/Kansas City Area**

Submitted by Clark & Mardi Jacobson, 1989

September 22, 1978, started the Lutheran weekends in Kansas City, MO. We held another weekend September 23-25, 1988, celebrating ten years of holding weekends in Kansas City. We have had outreach weekends into Kansas and Oklahoma. We have also helped the United Church of Christ expression get started in Kansas City. All this is because a hand full of couples cared enough to share with the rest of the world their dream of all couples being encountered.

Dennis & Sally von Waaden and Homer & Neva Locke both went on Catholic weekends in Kansas City. They, along with Tom & Pat Schaffer,

became Kansas City's first presenting couples. For a few years before September, 1978, Kansas City LME sent couples to St. Louis for LME weekends because none were available here.

Since the beginning, we have had several Lay Contact Couples. They were and are (in order) Homer & Neva Locke, Larry & Janice Gerhart, Jim & Michelle Blase, Chuck & Marsy Gordon, and currently Clark & Mardi Jacobson. Clergy Contact were Tom & Pat Schaffer, and currently Bruce & Edie Cottrell.

We have held out reach weekends in Stillwater, OK; Oklahoma City, OK; Tulsa, OK; Topeka, KS and Hutchison, KS. We have helped with one District II reunion along with the St. Louis community. It was held in Warrensburg, MO, in June of 1980. Interestingly there was a young couple getting married at the college on Saturday of the reunion. They were just coming out of the church about the time the reunion couples were going back to the dorm on Saturday evening. The reunion couples serenaded this couple, collected a good chunk of money, and sent them off on their honeymoon.

Several things are peculiar to Kansas City weekends and the LME community here. We use a long white couch for the presenting couples to give their presentations from instead of a table and chairs. All Kansas City weekends have been held at St. Paul's School of Theology in Kansas City. We have also always been known throughout LME that we mostly do our own thing. Not really rebellious or anything- just more weekend and people oriented. The Kansas City community sponsored the District II reunion in 1988. It was held at St. Mary's College in Leavenworth, KS on June 24-26, 1988. Everyone enjoyed a relaxed schedule of events. Many commented about the relaxed atmosphere and how nice it was not to have to rush to and from the scheduled events. They had plenty of time to be a part of the reunion but also to meet and talk to almost everyone. It was very hot but the

facility had tunnels that linked most of the buildings on campus, so there was no need to go out in the heat. It was really neat.

Kansas City held one EEE weekend in March of 1980. We held a 5th year anniversary in October of 1983 at Zion Lutheran Church. The theme was "Fall in Love Again". A 10th anniversary was held on November 12, 1988, at Trinity Lutheran Church. The same format was used except we had a catered dinner and a church service following the day's activities.

DISTRICT II**Kansas City Update**

ILME has had a rich history in the Kansas City area. We have had a total of five couples who have held the job of Lay Contact couple for this area.

Clark & Mardi Jacobson, 89-91

Jim & Pam Bush, 92-95

Jim & Cookie Black, 96-99

Jim & Brownen Soukup, 00-
with Jim & LaVerna Land

We were also blessed with a wonderful Clergy Contact couple from 1994-1998. Mark & Char Walters.

Between 1989 and 2000 we have had a total of 69 weekends with an average attendance of 19 couples per weekend. Included are weekends we have hosted for Wichita, KS.

We have two wonderful places to have our weekends in Wichita. They are at the Crosswinds Conference Center in Hesston, KS and Catholic Spiritual Life Center in Wichita, KS.

Jim & Pam Bush with John & Anne Borgelt helped Wichita start their weekends about 1992. They now have one weekend a year.

In 1996 the Kansas City area hosted the District II reunion at St. Mary's College in Leavenworth, KS. We had 45 couples and our theme was "Kansas City, Fountains of Love".

In 1998 we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the first Kansas City weekend with a picnic one weekend and a dance on a later weekend at Timothy Lutheran Church.

We have a tradition in Kansas City that every spring each spiral shares their love with the Barrington Bunny Story.

We have an Inter-faith cookout and camping trip every fall on Columbus Day Weekend. We also call upon our Inter-faith community when we are in need of additional prayer couples and we help them when they need prayer couples.

St. Louis and Kansas City have a LME "Vets" and "Rookie" weekend at the Lake of the Ozarks every Martin Luther King weekend in January. All Marriage Encounter expressions are invited to attend and the "Vets" are usually prayer couples for the "Rookie" weekend. January 2001 will be the 5th year.

Submitted by Jim & Pam Bush

DISTRICT II Missouri/St. Louis Area

*Submitted by LeRoy & Frances Ettling,
1989*

In August, 1975, LeRoy and Fran Ettling were encountered on a Catholic weekend. In January, 1976, the local parish priest for the Catholic ME community in which they participated, encouraged them to "pass it on" to the Lutheran couples of the St. Louis area. There was another Lutheran couple in their subdivision, Rich & JoAnne Polka, who had also gone on a Catholic weekend. Together the Ettlings and Polkas sent out a solicitation to all of the greater St. Louis churches for Lutheran couples who had gone on a Catholic ME weekend. One of these couples, George & Jan Kernohan, volunteered their home for the first get-together on a cold and windy February, 1976, Sunday afternoon. Approximately ten couples were there, sitting in a circle, not really knowing or having any ideas how to get a Lutheran expression of ME started. Ail of a sudden, there was a knock on the front door, and that same exuberant Catholic priest was suddenly in the meeting with all sorts of pertinent information and the St. Louis area was off and running! Father Austin Albers informed the

group that St. Louis was "beaten to the punch" by another Lutheran couple in Cheney, WA, Don & Karen Kurtz. They were about 6 months ahead of St. Louis. He gave the group their address and phone number. The Kemohans volunteered to be the St. Louis Contact Couple and gave the Kurtz's a call. Don & Karen Kurtz had more information for us. They had already had inquiries from couples in Kansas City, Chicago, and Texas about starting LME in the central part of the U.S. Before we knew it, about 3 months later, there was a meeting with the Kurtz's at Jan & George Kernohan's church, Hope Lutheran. At that meeting were couples from Kansas City: Homer & Neva Locke and Dennis & Sally vonWaaden. St. Louis area couples attending were LeRoy & Fran Ettling, George & Jan Kernohan, Rich and JoAnne Polka, Carl & Winnie Kliest, Al & Dottie Akerson, Dan & Judy Teuscher and a few other couples. Guidelines were passed out; dos and don'ts; sign up lists. It was quite a meeting. Little did the couples at that meeting realize at that time but that meeting later proved to be the nucleus of District II as we know it today. The hard part was getting teams to put on the first weekend. There were a lot of setbacks. The Kemohans moved to California due to a job transfer; Lutheran clergy couples were hard to convince to go on a weekend, especially a Catholic weekend. The Polkas and Ettlings and other couples desperately tried to get couples to agree to go on a deeper weekend. Finally, St. Louis had their own Clergy teams, Tom & Jeanette Teske and Dan & Judy Teuscher, and weekends started to happen in the spring of 1977. Within a 2-3 week time span, Lutheran weekends started happening in St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City, Ft. Wayne, San Antonio, and Houston.

We were thrilled when Dan & Judy Teuscher, a clergy couple, came to St. Louis from Utica, MI. Several Lutheran encountered couples were present for Dan's installation at his new church. Since then, there have been a lot of lay

team couples and clergy team couples that have put on St. Louis weekends, outreach week-ends and deepers. Records are lost or unavailable for the early years for the St. Louis area, but since May, 1980, St. Louis has had 30 weekends and 10 outreach weekends to other areas for a total of 952 encountered couples, 3 deepers, 2 EEE weekends and one District convention.

Editors note: First weekend in St. Louis was April 29-May 1, 1977.

Presenting couple were: Dennis & Barb Hesskamp, Admin.(CA); Rich & JoAnne Polka, Rookie; Larry & Val Peimann, Mid: Dan & Judy Teuscher, Clergy.

DISTRICT II St. Louis Update

*Submitted by Richard & Connie Buch,
St. Louis Lay Contact*

St. Louis sponsored a Deeper Weekend July 28-31, 1989. We had 21 couples commit to fulfill the dream of encountering the world one couple at a time.

The St. Louis Community sponsored the combined District I & II Reunion in 1994. It was held at the St. Louis University. Our theme for the weekend was "Love Changes Everything". Highlights of the weekend were a tour of the Fox Theatre and a melody of theme songs and mini concert performed by Dennis Ammann on the world's second largest organ. In all, about 125 couples were in attendance.

July 11-13, 1997 we hosted The International Family Reunion at Washington University, St. Louis, MO. The theme was "Meet ME in St. Louis, Lovers!" and was enjoyed by some 150 couples that arrived from Canada, Sweden, Iceland, Brazil, Australia, Finland, Norway and 25 states in the U.S. A massage technique led by Jennifer Scholbe and Chuck & Jacque Klockow, proved to be sooo relaxing some were caught sleeping on the job! Highlights included the parade of banners to the Edison Theatre, service at Graham Chapel, the ongoing skit by

Bob & Barb Carver and John & Jean Fuchs brought relatable tears of laughter, the accompaniment by Dennis Ammann to the classic silent movie "The General" along with melodies played by Fran & LeRoy Ettling. The magic number for the weekend was 88!

Originally St. Louis had an overnigher and invited Jefferson City, Kansas City, and Springfield encountered couples to the Lake of the Ozarks in January. It was always held on the Martin Luther King Holiday weekend giving travelers an extra day to return home or shop at many of the outlet stores. This weekend has now expanded to a Jefferson City LME weekend and now hosted by Jefferson City community. The couples on the overnigher are the prayer couples for the newly encountered couples on their weekend. It's a loosely structured weekend with a rekindling of our commitment to each other and our relationships. Saturday night is a fun filled time of Wine & Cheese sampling along with much reminiscing. We have 25 to 30 couples from several states attend every year. Contact Jerry & Lyn Brownlee for more details! You are all invited to join us and you won't go away hungry!

DISTRICT II Dallas/Ft. Worth Area

Submitted by Herb & Betty Dollar, 2000

Richard and Hope Benjamin experienced a Episcopal Marriage Encounter Weekend in Dallas. They came home with a vision of developing Lutheran Marriage Encounter. With a lot of hard work on their part and help from the Episcopal Community, the first Lutheran weekend was introduced to the Dallas/Ft. Worth area on October 3-5, 1980. There were 37 couples plus the 4 presenting couples on that weekend. Weekends were held at the Dunfy Hotel that had English Tudor decor. It looked like a castle and had long winding hallways. Occasionally, couples got lost going to and from their rooms. Unfortunately, this unique hotel was destroyed so a new hotel, restaurants and parking lot could be built. The prince

and princess environment of this old hotel added to the romanticism on the weekend.

The first presenting teams in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area were Ken and Val Hennings (clergy), Ken and Tari Hill, Charles and Helen Conrad, and Bill and Muriel Johnson (clergy). The Conrads and the Hills took turns at being Lay Contact Couple. The Hennings and the Johnsons were Clergy Contact Couples. The Conrads, the Hills and the Johnsons were on our first weekend.

Besides couples getting lost at the Dunfy, a couple of other funny things happened on weekends. All the expressions used the same hotel in the beginning. Sometimes weekends for several expressions were going on at the same time. Wow, did that confuse the couples at registration and for meals. On one weekend at a Marriott during the 90/90, the music from Saturday Night Fever was blasting in the room next door for a FAA convention. One time the hotel fire alarm went off. Bill and Muriel Johnson did not hear it. Everyone else did, and no one woke them up.

Since our beginnings, we have reached out to Waco, TX and twice to Shreveport, LA. Waco has become a stable circle/community area. Our area reaches from west Texas to Shreveport on the east and from Waco on the south to Oklahoma to the north. A lot of driving goes on to weekends, community functions and board meetings. Our community has gotten bigger and smaller a number of times now, but we still hold 2-3 weekends a year to bring the ME message to as many as we can.

DISTRICT II Texas/El Paso Area

Submitted by Gery & Lorain Amundson, 1989

In the Fall of 1977 several couples discovered each other and the fact that they had been encountered and shared a dream. By the Spring of 1978, Gery & Lorain Amundson, John & Barb Riley, Thurl & Carole Pope, Norris & Dottie Ellinwood, Steve & Karen Stoner and

Bob & Betty Sorenson had formed a group dedicated to bringing LME to the El Paso area. We received help and encouragement from both the Houston and Phoenix areas as well as the local Catholic expression.

Our first weekend was held in April of 1979 with Dave & Judy Bugh, Don & Sandee Christofferson, Jerry & Dee McKee and Thurl & Carol Pope as the first presenting couples. John & Barb Riley were the first Lay Contact Couple and Gery & Lorain Amundson were the first Clergy Contact Couple. John & Barb moved before our first weekend and Ingo & Inge Klein became Lay Contact Couple.

One humorous event concerns a foul-up in the pump at the retreat house where one of our weekends was being held. This caused mud to be sucked into the system just as people were taking the morning showers. One of the women ran to Pope's room shouting, "our shower is possessed!" Another time a sudden hard rain (unusual for El Paso) caused water to back up into the hotel where a weekend was being held. Water started coming through the ceiling of the conference room just after a presentation. The presenting couples had everything moved to a different conference room before the next presentation and couples never knew anything had happened.

On our early weekends, couples came from Albuquerque and later started an area there. El Paso has reached out to the Midland/Odessa area with at least two weekends held there.

DISTRICT II Texas/Houston Area

Submitted by Arnie & Sue Kaestner, 1989

The development of LME in Houston was started by Jerry & Dorothy McKee. In the later part of 1976, Jerry & Dorothy believed that LME in Houston was not an impossible dream and set out to organize the Houston community with Lutheran couples who had attended the Catholic weekends.

In the spring of 1977, the Houston board for LME was formalized with the goal of having the first Lutheran weekend in Houston by the end of the year. The board was named COR, a Latin word

meaning heart. Jerry & Dorothy were joined on COR by Dave & Carol Helms, Russ & Sandy Holmgren, Griff & Janice Linsen-meyer, Chester & Ollie McCown, Ric & Leslie McMillian and Jim & Barb Smith. Several "Nights of Celebration" were held throughout the city and encountered Lutheran couples from as far away as Louisiana attended to commit their support. The Houston community was aided by the Corpus Christi Contact Couple, Ed & Karen Griffin, and by the National Executive Clergy and Lay couples, Bob & Mary Jane Johnson and Don & Karen Kurtz, respectively.

Several couples attended a Team Deeper weekend and began to write their weekend presentations with the help of local Catholic presenting couples. In the meantime eight Love Circles were established and several couples wrote "Information Talks" and began giving presentations to explain the weekend in local churches. As a result, the first LME weekend in Houston was held November 18-20, 1977, with 29 couples attending. Three of the presenting couples were: Ed & Ruta Park, Admin (NV); Griff & Janice Linsenmayer, Rookie; Chester & Ollie McCown, Clergy. Jerry & Dorothy McKee were the first Lay Contact couple.

The following year 6 weekends were held with a total of 187 couples attending (average per weekend-31). In September, 1982, Houston presenting couples conducted a weekend in Victoria, TX at the request of Chester & Ollie McCown. Chester & Ollie organized a Love Circle in Victoria which did most of the behind the scenes work toward the weekend with the help of the Houston community. There were 27 couples attending the weekend, and a second weekend was held there in June, 1983.

In September, 1987, LME in Houston had encountered 1000 couples on a total of 41 weekends.

The Houston area is experiencing encouraging progress. In November 1999, a one day community loving task retreat was held to focus on inviting. Love and encouragement among couples was contagious. A new web site (450 hits plus 5 registrations) two letters to churches and nine temple talks

were certainly a major reason for the 28 couple weekend in February 2000. This is the kind of encouragement, dedication, faith and effort needed to make our dream a reality.

DISTRICT II Texas/San Antonio Area

Submitted by Red & Connie Warner and John & Sally Duenow, 1989

This area was first known as the South Central Texas Area with its beginnings in Corpus Christi. The first weekend there was September 9-11, 1977, with Don & Karen Kurtz, Admin (WA); Ed & Karen Griffin, Mid; Red & Connie Warner, Rookie; Steve & Janelle Kappler, Clergy. First contact couples for the area were the Griffins and Kapplers. In 1979 the weekends moved to San Antonio, with the first weekend being held in July, 1979. Warners and Kapplers were first Contact Couples in San Antonio.

DISTRICT III Canada/Saskatchewan

Submitted by Bob & Yvonne Warnes, 1989

In February, 1980, we, Bob & Yvonne Warnes of White City, SASK, attended a Catholic ME weekend. It was on this weekend that we formed a dream of bringing LME to SASK. With the help of the Catholic ME and United Church ME communities, we learned of a convention in Bismark, ND. In June, 1980, we attended the convention in Bismark. It was here that we met with the District III Lay Contact Couple who reviewed with us the how's of how to organize a weekend in a new area.

Between September and November, 1980, numerous contacts were made with the National Lay and Clergy Contact Couple. November of 1980, we received a letter from Otto & Barb Tollefson saying that they would be our contact and helper and outlined what had to be done to organize a new area. Between January and March 1981, letters were sent to all Lutheran encountered couples in SASK (names obtained from registration couples for the Catholic and United Church ME), outlining our dream and inviting them to an organizational meeting in March.

That first organizational meeting was held with 12 couples present. The dream intensified – a weekend date was set for

September 25-27, 1981. Monthly meetings, set up like a Community Night, began; loving tasks were established; recruiting began. In April, we, Bob & Yvonne, attended an Anniversary weekend in Bismark. On September 25-27, 1981, the first LME weekend was held in Regina SASK! Team couples came from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Washington and Oregon.

This was an outreach weekend from the Bismark community, and wouldn't have been possible without their support and guidance and also the help from the Catholic and United ME Communities in Regina. Our first contact couples were; Bob & Yvonne Warnes, Lay; Irv & Donna Pudrycki, Clergy. Since that first weekend we have averaged 1-2 weekends a year. (The last three years we have had one weekend a year.) Approximately 250 couples have been encountered. We have 5 presenting couples; 2 Mid, 2 clergy and I rookie. Since 1981 we have been considered as an area and part of District III.

DISTRICT III Minnesota/Twin Cities

Submitted by John & Ruthe Enstad, 1989

The birthing of LME in Minnesota was midwifed by Lutheran, Catholic and other Protestant couples who had experienced a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend. Job transfers either back to Minnesota from elsewhere or job transfers into Minnesota for the first time brought encountered couples into Minnesota. Many of us began looking for community that we had experienced elsewhere and National Marriage Encounter here was a vehicle for the bringing together of some of us. During the gestation period, we, John & Ruthe Enstad, moved back to Minnesota from Philadelphia in 1973 and found no Worldwide expression here.

Contact soon came from Frank & Judy MacImail, a Catholic couple who were going to be moving to Rochester, MN in late '73. In contacting Minnesota ME, eventually we found out about another Worldwide Catholic team who had moved here from California, Tom & Norma Kenny. They knew about a Catholic priest, Fr. Dan Welte, who also was in the area. Frank & Judy also knew another couple who had moved back to Winona, Jim & Evelyn Wagner.

This was the very first community of Worldwide couples to be formed in Minnesota, and it covered the Mpls/St. Paul area and southeastern MN. Soon another Worldwide Catholic team couple moved into the Twin City area Bill & Barb Wagner. Another Worldwide ME team priest moved back to the Winona area, Fr. Phil Gerlach, and the community began looking at holding Worldwide Catholic weekends somewhere in Minnesota. Weekends began at St. Teresa's College in Winona in 1974.

A newsletter for the burgeoning community was needed and was started by us. It was called "The Spirit of the North". As Protestant couples, especially Lutheran couples, made weekends, and once weekends began in the Mpls/ St. Paul area, the dream and vision of LME seemed more real. When any Lutheran couples, both lay and clergy, made weekends, we knew about it! In the middle of 1975, we heard of some couples in Spokane, WA that were talking about LME. We finally got a name and phone number and called Don & Karen Kurtz. It was a feeling of finding long, lost relatives that we didn't even know we had! The excitement of actually talking with someone who was working towards LME weekends, was pretty amazing and scary too, as now we knew that it wasn't just a fantasy or dream, but we had lots of hard, yet exciting work ahead of us. We knew that the labor and delivery of this new child would be painful, hard work and worth every ounce of effort to actually birth it.

Besides LME in Spokane, there were other areas working toward Lutheran weekends, and they reached out to us here in Minnesota. John & Bev Lang in San Francisco, Bruce & Andrea Maynes in Los Angeles, and Keith & Marion Bergstrom in Seattle. We heard about Pastor Bob & Mary Jane Johnson making a Worldwide weekend in Mpls, and shortly after that gave them a call. We set up a meeting at their home for a Sunday afternoon. We were rather curious about meeting in the flesh, an encountered clergy couple! We surprised them even more, by greeting them with John on crutches, due to a badly sprained ankle. This was another beginning of a special relationship.

A support community was formed, the beginning of an area board which included: Dick & Bonnie Larson, Rod & Arlene Johnson, Vernon & Ann Nelson, Bob & Mary Jane Johnson, Tim & Cathy Fogarty, John & Marci Unger, John & Darlene Malmstadt, Bob & Jean Spong and us. These were some of the couples who worked hard to be ready for our due date of birthing. There were many more too, whose love and support were very important and special for the whole community.

The first LME weekend in Minnesota was held April 23-25, 1976, at the Minnesota State Highway Patrol Training Facility in Arden Hills, MN, a suburb of Mpls. (This was the same facility Catholic Worldwide ME was using.) The teams for the weekend were: Don & Karen Kurtz, Admin.(WA): John & Ruthe Enstad, Mid; Tim & Cathy Fogarty, Rookie; Bob & Mary Jane Johnson, Clergy. The weekend was full, with over 35 couples plus a waiting list. This was the birthing of a long and hard labor and a very special new child became part of the LME family and also the larger Worldwide ME family.

The first contact couples for the area were: John & Ruthe Enstad, lay; Bob & Mary Jane Johnson, clergy. LME of Minnesota reached out to many areas: Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and three different areas in Minnesota: West Central, Northern and Southern. There have been many interesting and unique stories about weekends here, and we will try to highlight a couple. We know that there are many others that are all part of the ethos of ME in this area. With the first several weekends held at the Minnesota State Highway Patrol Training Facility, couples were sometimes greeted on Friday evening by trainees in gas masks and uniforms. The astonished looks on the couples' faces told more than their normal caution in beginning a new experience. Often the teams would have to explain that the early morning reveille was not part of the ME weekend! There even was one occasion when couples began showing emotions rather early... check-in time! Tears were being shed due to some tear gas canisters accidentally spilling into the air around the entrance. What a way to begin a weekend!

One other event that symbolized the desire of the Lutheran and Catholic encounter groups to stay united in some way, was a Renewal held January 14, 1977, one of the coldest nights of that winter. It was at least -25 degrees, plus windchill and our nickname of the "Frozen Chosen" was appropo. It was fitting that it was held at Grace Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis. Pastor Bob Johnson and Fr. Carroll Parker had worked hard on this community renewal, planning a service of celebration with a eucharistic meal at the close. They had been amazed at the similarities between the Lutheran and Catholic liturgies, and when it came time for communion, they used the same altar, one on either side of it. Protestant couples came to Bob at the same time Catholic couples came to Fr. Carroll. For many couples, this was a memorable evening of ecumenical celebration. But, it was short-lived. The unencountered hierarchy within the Catholic archdiocese heard about it and the separation of the two expressions into two different communities began.

It was not what either of the communities wanted at the time, but the inner workings and power of the Catholic hierarchy could not be denied. From that point on, separate communities unfolded. This was the push for the youngest kid in the family to grow up, and we as Lutheran community started to walk on our own. We knew that we still had lots of love and support from our original foster family of Worldwide ME.

The organization of the community was strong and willing to take on many tasks. Soon we were hosts of Team Deeper weekends and in the summer of 1979, hosted the LME National Convention, held at St. Olaf College in Northfield. We all thought it was a smashing success.

Editor's note: "Worldwide Marriage Encounter" is the same as the "Catholic Marriage Encounter" mentioned in other area's history. Enstads refer to "Worldwide Marriage Encounter" because there was another marriage encounter, called "National" that was prevalent in Minnesota at this time. Because there were differences, it was important to distinguish between them.

DISTRICT III Nebraska/West Iowa

*Submitted by Larry & Yvonne Andrews
1989*

Nebraska was first divided into two areas, East and West, but in the Fall of 1986, it changed from the two areas back into one. By the end of 1988, Western IA and NE were joined into one area. LME in Eastern NE was made possible by the hard work and determination of Chuck & Sherry Dowd and the small community of encountered Lutheran couples. We were also blessed by a weekend-ready clergy couple who moved from St. Louis to Omaha - Tom & Jeanette Teske. LME in Western NE was started through the efforts of Jack & Joan Lockwood and encountered Catholic couples in NE's panhandle. Our first weekends were outreach weekends from the Minneapolis community to both Eastern and Western NE. There was also support from Catholic, Episcopalian, Jewish and Methodist couples.

The first weekend in Eastern NE was in Omaha at Howard Johnson's on May 4-6, 1979. The presenting couples were John & Ruthe Enstad, Admin.; Chuck & Sherry Dowd, Mid.; Russ & Linda Brown, Rookie and Tom & Jeanette Teske, Clergy. The first weekend for Western NE was held in Scotts Bluff at the Scottsbluff Inn in Nov., 1979. The presenting couples were Dick & Bonnie Larson, Admin.(MN); Chuck & Sherry Dowd, Mid. and the Johnson's were clergy. Our first contact couples were Tom & Jeanette Teske, clergy and Chuck & Sherry Dowd, lay. In Western NE Jack & Joan Lockwood were the contact couple. We've been told that Larry & Sue Sydow and Roy & Diane Williams really got "serious" while writing their talks about self. They all showed up at their workshopping couple's home wearing Halloween masks. Wonder what their masks really were? The Omaha area loved to hear Steve & Deb Johnson tell the same stories at weekend potlucks for years. By the time they resigned from their loving task of Potluck Coordinators, many, many

couples knew about the carload of nuns.

In Eastern NE, we've helped Baptists start their own community and hold weekends. Also, our LME community started and still supports Lutheran Engaged Encounter in the Omaha area. The first weekend was in Nov. 1985.

DISTRICT III North Dakota Area

Editor's note 1989: First weekend was November 4-6, 1977, with Don & Karen Kurtz, Admin (WA); Therm & Peggy Kaldahl, Mid; Gerry & Loretta Hegstad, Rookie; Dick & Marilyn Luedtke, Clergy.

DISTRICT III South Dakota Area

Submitted by Bob & Carol Wagner 1989

In late 1977, a group of couples who had been on Catholic ME weekends in South Dakota and LME weekends in Minnesota, began work on getting LME weekends in South Dakota. The first weekend was held in Brookings in November of 1978 and weekends were held regularly in various east river locations and west river in Rapid City.

The ME community in Minnesota has offered outreach weekends in South Dakota.

DISTRICT III Wisconsin Area

Editor's note 1989: First weekend was October 21-23, 1977, in Lacrosse, with John & Ruthe Enstad, Admin (MN); Rollie & Sharon Slaback, Mid; Jim & Joanne Niedermeyer, Rookie; Bob & Mary Jane Johnson, Clergy (MN).

DISTRICT III Update

District III Reunions:

Minneapolis, MN "Love in Any Language" August 3-5, 1990
Grand Island, Nebraska, July 1 – August 2, 1992
Sioux City, Iowa, July 8-10, 1994
Steven's Point, Wisconsin, 1996
Alexandria, MN, July 10-12, 1998
Grand Island, Nebraska July 9-11, 1999
International Reunion 25th Anniversary, St. Paul, MN

The attendance has steadily been declining, but the warmth and love at reunions is still strong and abundant.

Over the past 10-12 years we have seen each state and province in District III dwindle from multiple areas within a state/province. Saskatchewan and North Dakota are inactive areas currently.

Eastern Iowa is struggling with low community support and only two presenting couples remaining.

Wisconsin has had a complete turn-over of community leadership and new spark and enthusiasm is occurring with increased number of weekends.

Minnesota has two areas active – the Twin Cities giving 5 weekends a year and Alexandria (outreach done in 1994) holds one weekend per year.

South Dakota has two presenting couples currently and plans 1-2 weekends each year.

Nebraska/Western Iowa has three active areas, Sioux City, Grand Island and Omaha, and they have 5-6 weekends a year.

Submitted by Jim and Anita Tollefson

DISTRICT III Canada Update

The Manitoba Area of District III began holding Weekends in Winnipeg in 1980, and had 5 Weekends until 1983. They were dormant for 10 years. Then in 1993 until the present, 6 Weekends have been held. Grace writes, "Throughout all the years, both in the early 80's and now, we have always had one clergy (Hendricksons) and a Rookie couple, but have had to bring in a Mid and Admin. from Saskatchewan or the US. Since 1993 we have had 91 couples who completed the Weekend."

"For the Saskatchewan part of our Area, I have only a little information. I do know that weekends began in Regina in 1981, and they continued holding weekends as well as in Saskatoon until 1997. At one time that Area had 2 Rookies, 2 Mids, 1 Admin and 2 Clergy couples. They are now inactive because these couples have either moved away or deselected."

*Submitted by
Gordon and Grace Hendrickson*

DISTRICT IV Arizona Area

Submitted by Jim & Ann Freeman, 1989

The first LME weekend in Phoenix was held on Feb. 20-22, 1976, in the Los Olives Hotel. Phoenix was the fourth area in the country to have a LME weekend. Prior to this time Lutheran couples were attending Catholic weekends. In this area it was the Catholics who helped with prayer couples and support to make that weekend a success.

The first presenting couples were: Tom & Cathy Schadt, Rookie; Dick & Kathie Thorpe, Mid; Don & Karen Kurtz, Admin; and Bill & Lenore Weinert, Clergy. The first contact couples were Dick & Kathie Thorpe, Lay and Jim & Ruth Lundeen, Clergy. LME in Phoenix reached out to the Methodist and Presbyterian expressions in our area.

We've also reached out to Colorado and New Mexico. In those early days the teams often traveled to other cities and the community would turn up at the airport to greet tired teams when they returned. Dick & Kathie said that was one of their warmest memories. They also remembered that those early weekends didn't always go as smoothly as they do now. One time the hotel made them change conference rooms every day. So after the rookies left for the last session of the day, the teams had to tear down, set up in a new room and then call all the couples to let them know where to go the next day.

DISTRICT IV Arizona Update

Submitted by Mickey & Sandy Preston

By the early '80s, Phoenix had 23 presenting couples and hosted 10 plus weekends per year. With the rewrites in 1983, the team community suffered greatly. Phoenix was left with only 5 presenters. As a result, weekends dropped to 2-3 per year. Overall the community kept going strong with East and West side activities; monthly meetings, love circles, and community evenings.

In July 1990, the District IV Family Reunion was in Phoenix. It was the first reunion to be held in a hotel. Phoenix temperatures reached an all time high of 122° the week before. Everyone appreciated the air conditioning and swimming pool.

In 1992, Arizona had only two presenters and hosted two weekends per year. About a dozen dedicated community couples remained to support Marriage Encounter weekends. Post weekend activities dwindled. In 1994 an Interfaith Board, consisting of Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist couples, was formed to share resources and support one another. Out of this, came one facility couple (Catholic) for all expressions, exchange of prayer couples, ecumenical community functions, and a closer knit sense of God's larger "family".

By 1996, there remained only one presenting couple, very little community, and Arizona took a hiatus. Arizona joined with New Mexico to combine to one area, sharing leadership and support. April of 2000, Arizona hosted their first weekend in nearly three years. It was supported by couples from the Catholic and Methodist expressions. Currently, (fall of 2000), Arizona is on the rise like the Phoenix Bird. The community is beginning to grow with two love circles in session and couples volunteering for loving tasks. We have two weekends scheduled for 2001.

Arizona continues to be an interfaith community. The various faith expressions offer prayer couple support for one another's weekends, join together for World Marriage Day activities, and host community events such as the annual Valentines Day Dance.

DISTRICT IV California/ Los Angeles Area

Submitted by Whitey & Carolyn Gail, 1989

The Beginning - Los Angeles and Orange County Units. (These two units were originally organized together, but soon became large enough to be two separate units.) The organizational meeting was held on September 14, 1975 in Torrance, CA. It was attended by over 100 Lutheran couples from Orange, Los Angeles and Ventura counties who had made weekends in the Catholic or Episcopal expressions.

There was also a couple from Phoenix, Dick & Kathie Thorpe and Don & Karen Kurtz from WA. (*Editor's note: We believe it was out of this meeting the famous saying came: "Do you think there's any interest?"*) The first contact couples were Howie & Mary Wennes, clergy and Bruce & Andrea Maynes, lay.

The first Los Angeles weekend was

held January 23-25, 1976 at the Americana Hotel in Culver City. There were 34 couples in attendance. The presenting couples were: Don & Karen Kurtz, Admin (WA); Ken & Elsie Edwins, Clergy (NV); Bruce & Andrea Maynes, Mid and Jack & Shirley White, Rookie. Because of the close proximity of many large metropolitan areas, all within Southern California, the "reaching out" was done within our own state. San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino began having week-ends following the "birth" of the L.A. and Orange County units.

The Catholic and Episcopal expressions were most helpful during the early days of the Lutheran expression. Some memorable moments in L.A.'s history included: ending a weekend in the chapel at L.A. Lutheran High School's campus while the hills of Burbank immediately above us burned furiously during the sing-off. (It didn't hinder the love and joy one bit.) Having to move a rookie open house (following the sing-off) because mud slides had blocked the access roads to the open house host's home.

Having all the electric power go off in the entire city of Burbank just after the presenting couple said, "Good evening and welcome to your marriage encounter weekend." The remainder of the talk was done with flashlights while resourceful community couples scurried around and came up with about 40 glass enclosed candles so the rookies could write and dialogue by the end of the talk. The rookies all chose to believe that this was a part of the weekend "atmosphere." We are thrilled to be a part of God's on-going miracle called "Marriage Encounter."

In 1998 Los Angeles hosted a Deeper Weekend, as well as four regular weekends. In 1999 there were three weekends. Although this very large area continues to struggle without leadership and a shortage of presenting couples, one community has continued to host two weekends per year. Publicity consists mainly of one mass church mailing per year and recruiting through Temple Talks in local Lutheran churches by Chad & Jill Kominek in Ventura County. That there is a real desire for weekends in Southern California is evidenced by the number of non-Lutheran couples who find their way to these weekends. Monthly Encounter Evenings are held in at least three of the communities within the area. Los Angeles couples continue to pray for leadership.

DISTRICT IV California/Orange Co. Area

Submitted by Whitey & Carolyn Gail of Los Angeles Areas, 1989

The first Orange County weekend was held April 9- 11, 1976, at the Royal Inn in Santa Ana. The presenting couples were: Don & Karen Kurtz Admin (WA); Jack & Shirley White, Mid; Denny & Barb Hesskamp, Rookie; Bob & Doris Janes, Clergy.

DISTRICT IV California/Riverdino Area

Submitted by Al & Lois Allbeck, 1989

The Riverdino Area of LME began as an outreach from the Orange County Area. The first contact couple was Dale and Karen Cladding from Fontana. Up until this time all of our couples went to Orange County, Los Angeles or San Diego for their weekends. With the urging of the Orange County community, in 1978, we began our own area.

In October 1978, we held our first weekend with Don & Sandee Christofferson, Admin: Dave & Marcia Cromer, Mid; Ken & June Durr, Rookie and Al & Lois Allbeck, Clergy. It was held in the Holiday Inn, San Bernardino, a motel right on top of the San Andreas Fault. The weekend we remember the most was given in Palm Springs. The temperature, over 100 degrees, was so hot it melted the plastic Tie Tac box on the dashboard. At the sing-off, the temperature was 115 degrees. More than 100 people waited in the heat to congratulate the new rookies. Eight couples from that weekend became presenting couples including Bill & Sharon Haigh, our present area coordinators. Bob & Florence Oliver were the Admin (OR).

When we met to decide on the name for our area, we had a lot of suggestions, but it boiled down to two: Inland Empire and Riverdino. Since there might be an Inland Empire anywhere in the USA, we chose a combination of our two counties: Riverside and San Bernardino. San Berside didn't sound too good, so at Al Allbeck's encouraging, we chose Riverdino. Our outreach has been to Las Vegas and to China Lake. At the present, Riverdino is holding three weekends a year.

Orange County and Riverdino have

combined to form the Tri-counties Area. Weekends are held in Ontario. The combined District IV-V Reunion "Surf's Up" was hosted in 1998.

DISTRICT IV California/San Diego Area

Submitted by Dave & Judy Peterson and Ron & Emily Hubbard, 1989

It was Orange County who reached out to help San Diego by allowing us up to 5 slots on each of their week-ends. We already had a small core group of Catholic-encountered Lutherans who wanted to start a Lutheran expression. The Petersons were encountered in June, 1976, in Orange County and immediately became involved in working toward holding a San Diego weekend. They volunteered to be open house coordinators. Skip & Elena McComas and Dave & Louise Nichols were Lay Co-Contact couples. At that time we had no Clergy Contact couple. Bob & Harriet Brandt soon took that position.

The Catholic community was very helpful to us in putting on our first weekend. It was held September 24-26, 1976, at the Ramada Inn in Escondido. Presenting couples were: Bruce & Andrea Maynes, Admin; Jack & Shirley White, Mid; Felix & Janet Palmer, Rookie; Troy & Annette Mooneyham, Clergy.

The first weekend with all San Diego presenters was in October of 1977. The presenting couples on that weekend were: Troy & Annette Mooneyham, Clergy; Bill & Laurene Ackerman, Rookie; Skip & Elena McComas, Mid and Gordon & Karen Boltz, Admin.

On the first weekend, the facility had double-booked us with a Catholic ME weekend. There was lots of room and schedule shuffling, hair tearing and laughter. The clergy husband had forgotten both his Bible and his under-wear. There was a rookie husband who wanted to give his wife a new wedding ring (hers had been lost) during the Sunday afternoon exchange of vows. The Admin arranged with the "gopher" couple to pick up a check, pick out a ring and sneak it back to the husband. It turned out happily. The wife loved the ring and it even fit! San Diego reached out and helped to establish Yuma as well as Riverdino.

One of the strongest and most active areas in District IV, San Diego continues to hold weekends and gives presenting couple support to Los Angeles and Tri-counties

areas, making it possible for these areas to continue hosting weekends.

DISTRICT IV Colorado/Mid Rockies Area

Submitted by Dave & Joan Russell, 1989

In 1977, the Mid Rockies began working toward having LME week-ends. Ed & Peg Meyer attended a weekend in Spokane, WA where Bob & Mary Jane Johnson, clergy from Minnesota, and Ed & Ruta Park, Admin from Nevada were presenting couples on the weekend. Minnesota and Nevada then reached out to us. Don & Karen Kurtz gave us lots of support as did the Catholic expression. We used the Catholic's master mailing list and got the Lutheran couples from it. Catholics workshopped our talks.

Our first weekend was in June, 1978, at the Denver Inn. The presenting couples were: Peg & Ed Meyer, Rookie; Neil & Diane Wersing, Mid; Bruce & Andrea Maynes, Admin and Bob & Esther Johnson, Clergy. Our first contact couples were Peg & Ed Meyer, Lay and Bob & Esther Johnson, Clergy. At the end of the first weekend when the doors opened, no one was there! Someone had sent all the prayer couples to the wrong room! We reached out to Wyoming to help them get started.

This is one of the most active areas in District IV. They will have two weekends in 2000 and have gotten some new couples to accept loving tasks

DISTRICT IV New Mexico Area

Submitted by Stewart & Louise Senneff, 1989

In Albuquerque, a core group of 8 couples was formed. These couples had been encountered on weekends elsewhere, and were interested in starting LME in Albuquerque. Phoenix supported us in our quest for a weekend, and presenting couples were sent from there and from S. California. Stewart & Louise Senneff were part of the rookie couples on that first weekend, May 29-31, 1981. When a "ready-made" clergy team couple, Ron & Mavis Barth, moved to our area later that year, we were delighted! Our first contact couples were Stewart & Louise Senneff, lay; Ron & Mavis Barth, clergy. Although things have slowed down since our beginning, we continue to have two full weekends each year.

DISTRICT V Alaska Area

Excerpts from the Alaska Newsletter, Dec. 1988. Written by Larry & Dahna Graham

During the Spring of 1976, only about a year after the first LME week-end to be presented anywhere was given in the Spokane area, the Catholic Expression of ME came to Alaska. Catholic couples started their recruiting and included Lutheran couples, as well as other Christian couples. At least two Lutheran couples got on the Catholic waiting list when it was very new and both went on Catholic weekends in the Fall of 1976, though at the time neither of those two couples knew the other one. Larry & Dahna Graham's weekend was in September and Ray & Shirley Hingst's weekend was not long after. Both couples started recruiting their Lutheran friends.

There were to be two information nights about a week after the Graham's weekend, and believing in the "wine 'em, dine 'em, sign 'em" part of the recruiting talk on the weekend, we had folks over for dinner and took them to the information nights with several couples each night. After all, we wanted them to have the weekend that had done so much for us. Unfortunately, what we quickly learned is that this thing had caught on so fast and the Catholics had such a small percentage of non-Catholic couples allowed on a weekend, our couples were told they were scheduled for a year to a year and a half later. That was discouraging.

What we needed were Lutheran weekends! We started writing every Catholic couple suggested by our local community couples as maybe having a clue as to whether or not they knew if there were Lutheran weekends and who we should contact. In the meantime, we met Ray and Shirley and they were as excited about the possibilities as we were. The Grahams were invited to attend a "Deeper Weekend," which was nothing we knew about but were told it would help us go even deeper into our relationship, and we went in December of 1976. Another beautiful and loving experience, but almost as important; the lay couple presenting that weekend was a couple who had been one of the original couples who, with Father Gallagher, had started ME in the US and was now living in WA. They told us to write Don & Karen Kurtz in Cheney, WA, the couple in charge of the new LME. That letter brought results.

There was LME and it was alive and the Kurtzs were crazy enough to believe Alaska could get involved. But we needed more couples.

As more of the couples we had recruited came off weekends, we recruited them as a basic community. Since we were not the only ones recruiting Lutherans, we were excited every time we heard of a Lutheran couple on a Catholic weekend. Our community began to grow. One thing we learned was that to have weekends we needed to have one clergy and two lay presenting couples weekend ready with talks. We sat around at one of our meetings and asked for volunteers. Kris & Joyce Frosig a clergy couple said yes and Dahna & Larry said they would if no one else would. We were in a quandary, since we still needed one more lay couple, until Pat & Thelma Parnell called and said "yes".

Don & Karen Kurtz sent John & Bev Lang from Milpitas, CA to meet with our small community to answer questions, check out the enthusiasm and possibilities, and to meet with the Catholic couples who would be workshopping our Lutheran talks. Our first weekend was held in January, 1979 in Anchorage.

On one weekend the presenting couples were still revising their talks after the Lutheran outline came out. Kris Frosig was reading a section of one of the talks at the table when suddenly another page came over the top of what he was reading. Joyce was revising at the table and absentmindedly had shuffled a page over to go on to her next page!

Tears would often come to the eyes of the original couples as they watched the church fill up at a potluck after a weekend. Often more tables had to be set up as the servers scurried to find more silverware. The noise and laughter grew from the rookies and veterans remembered their original weekends. A spell of love and excitement filled the entire room. Couples who had dreamed about this kind of thing wiped away their tears of joy and remembered when the entire community could fit very comfortably in the Hingst's living room. Now the large room was full of loving couples who gave thanks to God for all He had done. Tears seemed the only response. Now, tears of thanks to God from Alaskan lovers still come, while tears of disappointment and sadness mix with them, as the Alaska LME community returns to dust. We have all been touched by God's love and the memories linger on.

Alaska had its first weekend in more than 10 years in January 1999. The eccumenical sing-off had so many community couples that it required three rounds of "There's a New World Somewhere" for them all to get in. The area is growing rapidly and is very enthusiastic. Michael & Barbara Pier have been very effective in renewing this area. New leaders are Larry & Judy Helgeson.

DISTRICT V California/ N. California-N. Nevada Area

Submitted by Chuck & Ruth Harder and John & Sally Duenow 1989

Our first weekend was January 16-18, 1976, in San Jose. The presenting couples were: John & Sally Duenow, Admin (WA); John & Bev Lang, Mid; Laurie & Wanda Webster, Rookie; Bob & Doris Janes, Clergy. Later we combined with the Sacramento area to form our present Northern California Area.

On one weekend we did not have enough rooms because there was a convention in the hotel with lots of people. The ME couples were shuttled to another hotel for Friday night. During a weekend in Stockton there was also a police convention in the hotel and a rock band in the parking lot. It was so noisy Saturday afternoon that we moved the conference room to a "quieter" end of the building. In that room the air conditioner was almost as noisy as the band had been. One husband had stormed out of the conference room and told the band (which was on a flat bed truck,) that he would haul them away with his tractor if they didn't stop practicing!

The community is striving to develop post-weekend activities to help couples grow and interact spiritually and socially, and to be active in the Marriage Encounter community. In the past, mass mailings to Lutheran churches in the area were successful in filling weekends. However that source seems to be exhausted and the area will re-examine their method of inviting. The presenting couple community is alive and well with good progress in writing talks to the new outline.

DISTRICT V Idaho/S. Idaho-N. Utah Area

Submitted by Elmer & Jackie Arstein and Jeff & Sara Nelson 1989

The miracles of Marriage Encounter spilled over into Pocatello, ID in October, 1976. That was a Catholic reachout weekend from Boise, ID. Jackie and I were privileged to be on that weekend. We dreamed of

having LME in Pocatello. Catholic weekends began to grow rapidly to 3 weekends per year. In February, 1978, God moved Manfred & Jutta Berndt, through the encouraging of several recently encountered couples, to attend a Catholic weekend. Manfred & Jutta were caught up by the miracle of the Encounter. Monday after their weekend, Manfred announced we were going to bring LME to Pocatello and he even set a goal for the first Lutheran weekend as November 17-19, 1978.

Manfred's relentless enthusiasm went to work and things began to happen. A phone call to Ray & Carol Lawton in Spokane, WA revealed that putting on a weekend wasn't just automatic. We needed at least 1 clergy and 2 lay teams from our area to put on a weekend. It also revealed that God had transplanted Bill & Linda Patchen from Orange County, CA to Idaho Falls. Further more, they were an Admin couple who had the experience necessary to know what steps needed to be taken before LME could become a reality in Pocatello. Two weeks later the first LME meeting was held at the Berndts'. There were six couples present: the Berndts, Bill & Linda Patchen, Gabe & Karen Flicker, Clar & Twilla Skov, Ed & Marilyn Grieve and Jackie & I. The highlight of the meeting was an inspiring personal sharing by Bill & Linda. They ended the sharing by asking each couple present to write them a letter answering the question, "What are you willing to do to make LME a reality in S. Idaho? Answer fully and in loving detail." A week later, Manfred & Jutta and Jackie & I were chosen and had accepted the commitment to being presenting couples. The church parking lot at First Lutheran Church in Idaho Falls brought Steve & Nancy Duff and Bill & Linda together. Later after some agonizing moments, Duffs were won to LME from National Encounter. LME was on a roll! All the love and commitment necessary to have a weekend came to fulfillment on the planned weekend, November 17-19, 1978 in Pocatello. Soon after, Ken & Dolores Dugan from Port Orchard, WA were called to Boise and Glenn & Martina Koch were called to Utah Both couples became clergy team couples. The first Boise weekend was held in March, 1979. From that beginning we increased first to six weekends a year then to nine as we reached out to Twin Falls in November, 1980, and to Salt Lake City, UT in 1982. There have been over 40 weekends in our S. Idaho/N. Utah Area and

over 1400 couples encountered. We have had lots of fun! Three of the couples drove day and night from Idaho to Minnesota to surprise the Idaho presenters at the ME Reunion there. Once a couple from the street came in to join the group on Saturday night and just sat down to joined in! An encountered pilot left a note supporting and encouraging the weekend as he spent a night in Pocatello. In 1980, Bill & Linda Patchen of Idaho Falls gave several information talks at local Lutheran churches in Utah. Norm & Jeanette Priebe were present at one of these talks and subsequently signed up and went on the September weekend in Idaho. Norm & Jeanette had a great weekend. God lit a major fire under them! They became a presenting couple. With the help of Elmer & Jackie Arstein, they held an organizational meeting and plans for the first Lutheran Utah weekend were made. With the loving help of the Catholic, Episcopal and Presbyterian expressions, the first LME weekend took place April 16-18, 1982, The presenting couples were: Norm & Jeanette Priebe, Rookie; Jerry & Joan Murphy, Mid; Elmer & Jackie Arstein, Admin and Glen & Martina Koch, Clergy. The weekend went well with only one hitch - the Aldonza tape broke! The presenting couples handled it with Norm running to their motel room for the spare tape while Martina assigned the couples to read the hand-out. The Priebes & the Kochs were the first contact couples in the area. Since that first weekend, LME in Utah has continued with ups and downs. Couples from as far away as Price and Richfield have been encountered, but because of the small percentage of Lutherans, a regular group has not formed. LME in Utah has helped the Methodists begin their own expression in the area. LME in Utah is presented with a unique situation. There are about 5000 Lutherans in this very large state which makes it difficult to build a large LME group. However, LME has provided a way to reach out to many with the love of Christ first and above all.

They have a dream – to renew weekends in Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Burley and Ogden, Utah. They are anxious to see the effect of the new color ads and announcements that have come out.

DISTRICT V Oregon Area

Editor's note 1989: The first weekend was held in Eugene, OR on June 18-20, 1976, with the following team couples: John &

Sally Duenow, Admin (WA); Bob & Florence Oliver, Mid; Malcolm & Cookie Trupp, Rookie; Rick & Sue Rouse, Clergy. The center for weekends eventually moved to the Portland area.

In 2000, the Oregon area had another powerful weekend in Bend and the couples are on fire. They are excited about getting circles going with the spark from these couples. Their enthusiasm is great and there is hope for a strong, vital future.

DISTRICT V Washington/Spokane-Inland Northwest

Submitted by Gary & Joyce Blazek 1989

At 5:30 p.m. on Friday, October 17, 1975, some cars made their way up a winding road to a huge brick complex which sits on a hill overlooking Spokane, WA. A few couples carried in supplies and began setting things out on tables and putting up signs. Four couples sat in a dining room large enough to seat 200 and dined on Arby's sandwiches they had brought with them. They were about to present the first LME weekend that was ever given...anywhere. They were all rookie teams-none of them had ever given a weekend before, even the Admin couple. As they ate, other couples were setting tables for breakfast. Before long, cars came steadily up the hill. It was getting dark and the place up ahead looked kind of spooky. The couples in the cars wondered just what they were doing coming to this old place, which formerly had been a Catholic Seminary. Some saw the signs telling them to park in the tennis court and to enter the building through the back door. Others missed the sign, and wandered around wondering where to come in and where the activity was. They straggled in, most of them with a look of panic on their faces! The first person a lot of them saw was an old Jesuit priest, who despite being all crippled and in a wheelchair always had a smile for everyone. Friendly couples greeted the newcomers and showed them to their rooms. It was very noisy, not only from excited voices, but also from all the feet going up and down the hall on the marble floors. The bedrooms were small and, lets face it, downright dingy! There were two twin beds, a sink, a table, two chairs and a tall window with a tattered shade dangling over it. Yes, the rooms did have doors, but no keys. Down the hall were the bathrooms, one for all the men, and one for all the women. There were even showers, but not always hot water. The conference room was

none too large, so the hard, straight wooden chairs were close together. By Saturday, the couples learned to bring their bed pillows along for cushions. Up two flights of stairs was a chapel we could use. Its windows were of imported stained glass from Europe and were beautiful. There were few distractions...no televisions, no radios, not even any comfortable chairs! This was the setting for the first LME weekend.

The Catholic ME community had given much love and effort in helping a handful of Lutheran couples who had been encountered on a Catholic weekend prepare for their own expression of ME. Appropriately, the setting was at Mt. St. Michaels, now mostly empty except for a few retired Jesuit priests and brothers. What little community LME had, worked very hard on the weekends. They cooked, served the food, washed dishes, set the tables, moved chairs, and even made beds. In return, they were blessed in being a real part of God's work and were thrilled to watch the miracles happening on the week-end.

We continued giving weekends at "the Mount" until January, 1978; a total of 23. Then the Catholic Church sold it and we had to move to a hotel. That was a sad day for those of us who had grown to love it and its special residents. Yes, we found it much easier to use a hotel, and certainly a lot less work for our community. But, we missed it! In October, 1975, our dream was to have an LME weekend. We didn't know what was ahead. What happened was like an explosion! We wanted more weekends in Spokane. Couples were calling from all over. California wanted a weekend. Minnesota wanted a weekend. Arizona wanted a week-end. And so on.

Although we were in our infancy, to everyone else we were the parents. They wanted help. They wanted advice. They wanted more help. There weren't enough of us. The National Board was set up in Cheney, WA. In June, 1976, we had our first International couple encounter...a couple came down from Canada. We had our first convention in June, 1977, at Long Beach, CA. We had our first EEE weekend in October, 1977.

Nationally we reached out to all who asked for help. Locally we put on outreach weekends in Wenatchee, WA, Great Falls, Columbia Falls and Missoula, MT, McNary and Pendleton, OR and Penticton, Canada. LME grew and grew. From a few dedicated couples with a dream, LME spread from Cheney, WA to all over the U.S. and

overseas. Those first four presenting couples were: Don & Karen Kurtz, John & Sally Duenow, Phil & Doreen Maakestad (all from Cheney) and John & Bev Lang (from CA). Our first contact couple was Gary & Joyce Blazek (from Spokane).

It is 14 years since our first organizational meetings where a few couples got together and dreamed about starting LME. There's been a lot of changes and growth. Although we now give fewer weekends in Spokane, they're just as exciting and worth-while. We've even stopped using a hotel for our facility and now use a dorm at Eastern Washington University in Cheney. It's been an incredible experience watching LME over the years. When we read about a weekend overseas, we remembered the first information night given in Spokane One couple came, and they weren't interested. We knew that that we had nowhere to go but up!

The Inland Northwest West community is doing well. The community is growing and continues to have strong community events.

DISTRICT V Washington/Western Area

Submitted by Keith & Marion Bergstrom 1989

There were so many plans to make and then we all did so many weekends so quickly that now-13 years later-things seem to be a blur. Our first weekend was August 6-8, 1976 in Seattle. We had an enthusiastic and anxious community who had worked hard at putting the weekend together. Most of the couples had been encountered either on a local Catholic weekend or had traveled to Cheney to experience one of the first LME weekends. Many of our first prayer couples were from the local Catholic community.

The presenting couples on that first weekend were Don & Karen Kurtz, Admin; Keith & Marion Bergstrom, Mid; Bo and Allie Kurle, Rookie and Charlie & Sandy Mays, Clergy. The weekend was held at the Duwamish Inn, Seattle. Most of our support for that first weekend came from the loving couples in Cheney and Spokane. We received what seemed like endless phone calls giving us guidance and encouragement.

Some couples were prayer couples even though they were over 250 miles away! The Catholics gave us much love

and support. They gave us a lot of advice, provided prayer couples, helped workshop some of the presentations and one lovely woman even made beautiful batik banners for use on the weekends. We were invited to attend any of their events and received much love and encouragement through phone calls and assistance in procedures for our loving tasks such as registration and weekend details.

Later, the LME community was able to assist other denominations in the same way, namely the Presbyterians and the Methodists. We acted in the same "parenting" role and provided first weekend support as needed. Our first contact couples were Keith & Marion Bergstrom, lay and Charlie & Sandy Mays, clergy.

Couples of the Washington/Western Area are feeling joy for 14 presenting couples, 9 who have presented weekends. New couples are stepping forwards, volunteering for loving tasks. The community looks forward to the Area Campout which has become a tradition and a reminder that we are "family." The Area continues search for ways to involve newly encountered couples.

DISTRICT V Montana/Big Sky Area

Submitted by Randy & Stevie Schmitz 1989

First weekend was July, 1980. First contact couples were: Randy & Stevie Schmitz, lay; Bill & Kay Morrissey, clergy.

After a successful weekend in March, 2000 in Billings, that community is excited and actively working toward rebuilding community. The Great Falls community also hosted a weekend in May, 2000.

DISTRICT V Wyoming Area (Big Sky)

Submitted by Russ & Ann Hillman 1989

LME began in Gillette, WY in February of 1986, when 7 couples journeyed to Billings, MT to experience their weekend. A presenting clergy couple, Russ & Ann Hillman, had begun serving Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Gillette on November 1, 1985. With the help of 7 Methodist ME couples, Russ & Ann gave information talks, wrote letters and hosted a "welcome back" potluck. Two love circles were formed immediately. From this nucleus over a hundred couples from Gillette and nearby communities have experienced an LME weekend. They have traveled to Billings, Cheyenne, WY,

Denver, CO as well as Gillette. There are 12 active love circles at the present time.

Our first Gillette weekend was held on Nov. 11-13, 1988. Big Sky of Billings reached out to help us with this undertaking. Thirty-two couples completed the weekend. Presenting couples were Mike & Linda Olson, Rookie; Brian & Jerri Hanneman, Mid; Bruce & Shirley Mullikin, Admin and Russ & Ann Hillman, Clergy. We have in turn reached out to Western South Dakota, Northeastern Wyoming and Central Wyoming. The potential is great in these areas and we intend to continue to reach out to them.

DISTRICT V Western Canada/Alberta Area

Submitted by Tom & Joan Copeland 1989

In the Fall of 1978, Ed & Fay Schatschneider contacted Carl & Maureen Ogren requesting information about the possibility of having an Alberta ME weekend. Following their advice, we worked out how many Lutherans we have in Alberta, if there were enough Lutheran couples who had already been encountered could help, and a weekend location. This information was compiled and sent to Carl & Maureen. Then we waited.

In the Spring of 1979, Don & Sandee Christofferson, National Lay Couple, contacted Ed & Fay and gave the go ahead for a weekend. On October 29, 1979 Alberta LME held their first kick-off meeting at Earl & Della Branson's home with Clarence & Irene Jobs, Oliver & Donna Nelson, Reinhold & Hanna Jobs, Alfred & Louise Schatschneider, Leonard & Karen Walker, Roy & Eileen Hoven and Ed & Fay in attendance. ILME reached out to Alberta and on February 15-17, 1980, in Red Deer, the first weekend took place with 32 couples completing the weekend. The presenting couples were Martin & Annemarie Brunner, Rookie (Ontario); Merle & Bev Austin, Mid (ND); Don & Sandee Christofferson, Admin (CA) and Jerry & Margy Strickler, Clergy (CA). Catholic and United Couples help with our weekends.

The first contact couples were Ed & Fay Schatschneider, Lay and Vern & Rose-Aline Begalke, Clergy. The first Alberta presenting couples were Oliver & Donna Nelson, Lay and Vern & Rose-Aline Bagalke, Clergy.

We held our first weekend in two hotels side by side, divided by a fence.

There had been an extra amount of snowfall in the month of February. Margy Strickler, in her housecoat and borrowed boots would jump the fence to make wake-up calls for the couples. There was also a water line that broke and flooded the conference room. Martin Brunner's watch rang in the middle of the night, he got so excited that he called Jerry & Margy. He thought they had slept in and missed their wake up call! Alberta has reached out to Kelowna, BC; Camrose, AL; Grand Prairie, AL; Calgary, AL; Cranbrook, BC and Edmonton, AL.

CANADA

This Canadian Lutheran Marriage Encounter history was submitted in addition to that also included in the District histories:

District I Ontario

Submitted by Tim & Ginny Ehrlich

Pastor Eric and Kathryn Weber were told of Marriage Encounter by Harold and Mildred Ciceri, who persisted until they went on a Catholic Weekend in Windsor, Ontario. The Webers began attending meetings in Michigan, where an excited group of Lutheran couples quickly latched onto the last link in their plans ... the elusive clergy couple! The Webers became the first Michigan Clergy Contact Couple, while simultaneously developing the Ontario dream. Couples attended Ontario Catholic & Anglican, or Michigan Lutheran W/E but wanted to offer Lutheran Weekends. So with the help of the Michigan Area and local Catholic couples, LME in Ontario came to be.

On November 10 - 12, 1978, in Waterloo, the first Canadian Weekend occurred, making LME truly international. For Earl & Vi Cook, Eric & Kathryn Weber, John & Kathy Liddle, Gerry & Dorothy Weicker, Stan & Diane Devitt, Sim & Carol Martin, Kenn & Diane Ward, Terry & Barbara Pitts, Howard & Margaret Wilson, it was their dream come true. The presenting couples were: Eric & Kathryn Weber, Waterloo (clergy); Felix & Janet Palmer, Florida (admin); Will & Barb Gabble, Michigan (mid); and John & Gloria Deutschlander, Waterloo (rookie). Our first Clergy Contact Couple was Eric & Kathryn Weber and our first Lay Contact Couple was Earl & Vi Cook.

On October 30 - November 1, 1981, further growth occurred when Weekends

were offered in Pembroke, Ontario, near the nation's capital city of Ottawa. To this day, we hold Weekends in both areas of Ontario, 2 in Southern Ontario, one in Eastern Ontario.

The first Weekend held in Pembroke was in a Catholic Hospital, where the nun's dormitory was used. There were no mirrors on the medicine cabinets, and single beds. Later on, a different facility was used where there ended up being too few rooms, so one presenting couple used a 'large' closet as their bedroom. This closet was next to the men's washroom. Also, a gentleman requested someone go out and buy him some ExLax (no problem). During the Saturday afternoon break, these two seemingly innocent variables met head on. It turned out that the closet/washroom wall was less than soundproof - enough said!

On an Anniversary Weekend in Waterloo, the presenting couples got the shock of their lives . . . they returned for the next talk and no couples were in the conference room. This alarming situation was resolved when they found all of the devious couples hiding in the washrooms down the hall!

Another time in Waterloo, a partying group of hockey players caused an executive suite to be flooded. The water began dripping into the conference room just as the last talk ended Saturday night. The hotel staff were very helpful, and cleaned up the mess immediately. The next morning, everything was back to normal, and the rookies never knew what almost hit them.

Finally, we in Ontario are a dedicated, vibrant group of lovers who really believe that we can change the world. Over the years, we supported the first Weekends in British Columbia, Alberta, Norway and Iceland. We held prayer vigils for many first weekends throughout the U.S.A., and wrote love letters for many weekends outside of Ontario. We have Adopted Florida as our buddy Area, in the hopes that we can share our love across the border. We hosted the District I Reunion in Waterloo, July 1 - 3, 1988 as a way of strengthening our North/South ties. We are now in the process of developing our Canadian bonds, particularly with the Western provinces. Ultimately, we hope to encounter couples in all 10 provinces and 2 territories!

District V Alberta

Ed & Fay Schatschneider, Earl & Della Branson were encountered in 1978 on a Catholic weekend, following their weekend

it was their wish to have Alberta Lutheran couples experience the same. They began to pursue the possibility of having a weekend in Alberta. In God's time, contact was made by the LME National Board, who decided to outreach to Alberta. On Feb. 15-17, 1980 in Red Deer, with the help of the Catholic community, Don & Sandee Christofferson, National Lay Couples; Jerry & Margy Strickler, National Clergy Couple; Merle & Bev Austin, Martin & Annemarie Brunner gave the first weekend with "A Mountaintop Experience" as the sermon for the Communion Service, which all began the beginning of a dream of a new area in Canada. Our first Alberta teams were Vern & Rose-Aline Begalke and Oliver & Donna Nelson.

Alberta has outreached their weekends to Kelowna, B.C.; Camrose, Grand Prairie and Calgary.

Call To Be Family In Canada

Due to the laws of Canada, By-laws were drawn up, so "Call To Be Family In Canada" was set up on April 20, 1980 with John & Gloria Deutschlander, Eric & Kathryn Weber, and Ed & Fay Schatschneider, as Directors. Call To Be Family In Canada was incorporated on June 27, 1980 so we could apply for the issuing of tax receipts.

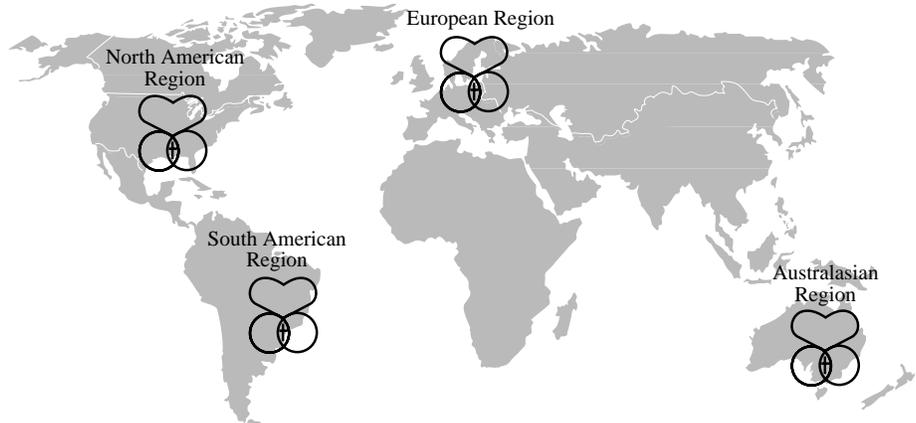
Also, due to customs and loss of dollar value the loving task of Canadian Finance Couple was set up with Clarence & Irene Jobs accepting the position. Later the loving task of Canadian Supply couple was set up with Earl & Della Branson filling that position.

Our first Canadian Board meeting was held January 1983 to meet and share, grow and discuss how Canada wished LME should go - it was unanimous that our north-south relationship was the best and most effective way of spreading the Dream and receiving support.

District III Manitoba

Gary & Barbara Rasmussen, Gordon & Grace Hendrickson, encountered on a United weekend, attended a Deeper, and became Manitoba's first teams. The first Manitoba weekend was held November 14-16, 1980 in Winnipeg, Manitoba with Steve & Janelle Kappler, Bob & Coleen Norrgard, Dick & Mary Bowman, Jerry & Peg Oliver as teams.

Even though there are no weekends being given at present, Peter & Anne Stiller



remain as active Clergy Presenting couple in Manitoba.

District V British Columbia

In British Columbia weekends have been held in Penticton, an outreach from Spokane and in Kelowna, an outreach from Alberta.

With hard work and determination of Art & Lynn Bucholtz, weekends have been held in Langley, an outreach of Western Washington. The first weekend was June 11-13, 1982 with Dave & Marsha Cromer, Armin & Bev Mohr, Luke & Donna Lucas, Bob & Jan Weinman as teams. Jim & Jean Cairns became the first presenters.

District III Saskatchewan

Bob & Yvonne Warnes, encountered on February 1980, contacted the community and with a core of fifteen couples and the help of the Catholic and United couples the first weekend was held in Regina, Saskatchewan with Dick & Carol Burton, Bob & Terri Ferguson, Gary & Barbara Rasmussen, Gordon & Grace Hendrickson as teams. This weekend was an outreach from Bismark, North Dakota.

Bob & Yvonne Warnes were Saskatchewan's first presenting couple.

We really want to say thanks to all the couples whose names would be too numerous to mention yet have given so much of their time and lives to work in God's ministry of LME.

One more thanks, to our International Family who has given us so much to keep our "Dream" alive and growing.

*by Ed & Fay Schatschneider
Alberta LME*

EUROPEAN REGION

FINLAND

Submitted by Hannu & Maija Nyman 1989

In 1986 a clergy couple, Hannu & Maija Nyman attended the weekend in Reykjavik, Iceland. In faith they set the date for a weekend in Finland the next year, even though they did not know how it would ever be possible. In the summer of 1987, the Nymans had their deeper in Phoenix. In August of the same year two other Finnish couples, Ari & Maarit Koivulahti (lay) and Erkki & Seija Taivainen (clergy) attended the weekend in Norway. So we had the community of three couples to prepare the first weekend.

The impossible dream came true and the weekend was held on Nov. 6-8 in 1987 in Vivamo. It is a conference center of the Lutheran organization called the Peoples' Bible Society. There were 26 couples attending the weekend and the presenting couples were Orn Jonsson & Frida Johannsdottir, Clergy (Iceland); Ed & Edda Swan (Iceland); Leif & Kirsten Ronsen (Norway); Svein & Marit Bjellas (Norway). Maija & Hannu presented their first two talks together with the clergy couple Orn & Frida.

The second weekend was also in English as was the first one. It was in May, 1988 in Vivamo. This time the presenting couples were the same except the clergy couple was Hannu and Maija alone. They had finished their clergy talks. October 28-30, 1988 was the FIRST FINNISH weekend. All presenting couples are now Finnish and that is the great step to reach the whole of Finland. The first contact couples are Seppo & Tuula Lisko, Lay and Hannu & Maija Nyman, Clergy. The first Finnish presenting couples are Alf & Merja Bjorklof, Michael &

Terttu Derry and the Liskos and the Nymans. Many humorous events have happened because of the differences in the languages. When we try to find the right Finnish expressions to the words, we often find special English-Finnish combinations.

Our community has had such joy and funny evenings because of the translation. Before the second weekend our community had exciting moments. In Iceland they just had the airline strike and Ed & Edda Swan had to fly to Finland. We all listened to the TV on Thursday night. What shall we do if they cannot come. Finally they got the flight to Finland and it was really God's miracle. They had to fight to get through to the plane and as a memory of that, Ed wore the broken shirt.

We all see ILME as the Lord's miracle and gift to Finland. We dream that some day we can reach some other countries. Finnish speaking people live all over Europe. Finland is very grateful for Iceland and Norway for their support and love for us.

ICELAND

Submitted by Larry & Judy Helgeson 1989

We were stationed in Iceland and we were the only Lutheran couple who had made a weekend. Ted & Lily Golondzinier asked if we would consider getting LME going in December of 1984. We had prayed for a task of some sort that we could do in Iceland as a couple and get to know the Icelandic people. LME was an answer to our prayer. We met with the Bishop and the go ahead was given. There was a Chaplain Philip Anderson, Lutheran, who had never been on a weekend who did lots and lots of work to make it a success. Without him we're not sure if it would have survived. Everyone worked and it is going beautifully, Praise the Lord!

There were three Catholic weekends before the first LME weekend in April, 1985. The presenting couples were from the US: Jim & June Harvey, Al & Erlene Sager and Bob & Colleen Norgard. The Fall weekend in 1986 was done by all Icelandic couples. Our contact couples are Larry & Judy Helgeson and Orn Jonsson & Frida Johansdottir.

NORWAY

Submitted by Trygve & Sissel Eriksen 1989

What was the beginning of LME in Norway? A bumpersticker in Long Beach, CA in 1978! We were looking for a

program for marriage enrichment in our parish. I studied a half year at a seminary in California hoping to find something but failed. At the end of the stay I saw a car with a bumpersticker saying "We Believe in Marriage". I saw two smiling faces inside the car. What we mostly were taught at the seminary was counseling for liberation and how to divorce in a proper way. The message on the sticker was the world we were looking for. I asked the local pastor. He and his wife were going on a weekend the week after. He told us that they had been on a waiting list for a long time. With only two weeks left in California, we had no hope. for going on a weekend. But we carried the memory of the bumpersticker in our hearts and in the fall we went to Washington, DC on a Catholic weekend with Worldwide and the weekend afterwards a deeper with National. It was alot of money to spend on two weekends, but it was worth each nickel. The message of the bumpersticker was the truth. We got to see Jim & June Harvey immediately and also Bob & Colleen Norgaard. They called Otto & Barbara Tollefson and they asked us to set up for a weekend in the coming spring, The Viking soil was harder than expected but Otto & Barbara did a marvelous job. They succeeded in 1982 with the first weekend in Norway. It was Fall at Maria Holm schoolcenter, Spydeberg, 50 kilometers out of Oslo. The presenting couples were Otto & Barbara Tollefson, Dave & Ada Dorn and Bill & Linda Patchen. Among those who helped us in Norway were David & Rita Brown, Catholic, and John & Liz Gelding, a Catholic/Methodist couple. Our first contact couples were David & Rita Brown, Lay and Sissel & Trygve Eriksen, Clergy. To have Norwegian Lutheran ME being run by English Catholics, that's ecumenism on a high level. Since then we have reached out to Finland and Sweden. *Editor's note: First weekend date was October 1-3, 1982.*

SWEDEN

Submitted by Berit & Hans Laurell

At wintertime in 1985 Astrid & Olle Tingdahl (their surname at that time was Andersson) were given the possibility to attend an English-spoken LME weekend in Stavanger, Norway. The weekend touched them deeply: "a long-acting vitamin enrichment". Half a year later,

Kirsten & Leif Ronsen, a dedicated Norwegian couple, asked them to assist in introducing the Weekend in Sweden.

This contact resulted in letters from the Tingdahls to their circle of friends, inviting them to a weekend in Laxå, Sweden. 20 couples responded and in November 1987 the first weekend was held in Sweden - in the Norwegian language, which is understandable in Sweden.. The presenting team: Kirsten & Leif Ronsen, Sissel & Trygve Eriksen (clergy couple), Elisabeth & Ole Engelsen and Randi & Per Ronsen. Understandable mostly yes, but one anecdotal story tells the opposite: During one weekend a Norwegian male presenter humorously stated that "there are some here who believe that this is a Marriage Encounter weekend. But, in fact, it is a camouflaged language course in Norwegian.." (laughter!). And the same person expressed about their first weekend: "When I heard that we were told to be writing for 90 minutes, I realized, that there was humour on this weekend!!"

As in other countries the first weekend was a strong experience. Besides the touching message, giving unforgettable experiences among the couples, we remember that Trygve Eriksen had brought the wine for The Holy Supper from Kana in Israel. And: that he had got the flu before the weekend, managing his presentations in a high fever, that forced him to take a shower between his talks...The weekend was unforgettable in spite of bunk beds. On the Rookie Renewal February 6, 1988 Margareta & Lars Hagman were chosen lay contact couple for the present. Berit & Hans Laurell were asked to translate parts of the ME material - American and Norwegian - into Swedish. Having performed this work, this couple accepted to become one of the first two Swedish presenting couples together with Camilla & Christer Wallström, in 1990.

The first love circle started in 1988 in Ljungskile. Sweden was not a district of its own at that time but belonged to Norway. From there and from other Northern countries Sweden received much assistance, the Icelandic clergy couple Frida Johansdottir & Örn Jonsson giving talks in the second weekend in 1988, and Merja & Alf Björklöf from Finland assisting us in weekends during 1993-94. In July 1992

Berit & Hans Laurell were elected lay contact couple and Camilla & Christer Wallström assistant lay contact couple. In September the Swedish ME district board was constituted. In 1995 the first clergy contact couple Ebba & Carl Eric Svensäter joined the team to be in charge of leading the work together with the Laurells. On the weekend in October 1995 Sweden had a full Swedish team.

We are very thankful to all the dedicated couples who carried the ME work in their loving tasks from the very beginning and for many years on. And above all, Our Lord is faithful.

AUSTRALASIAN REGION

Submitted by Jim & Michelle Blase, 1989

At first about 25 Lutheran couples had attended Anglican weekends over a period of months. From those couples, 6 couples were asked to consider becoming a presenting couple. Three couples said yes. The three couples were: Rod & Pat Pfeiffer, Netley, South Australia; Bruce & Johanna Noll, Port Augusta, South Australia; and Pastor John & Lois Grosse, Lyons, Australia Capitol Territory. These couples along with Fred & Gale Birch, Park City, UT were the first presenting couples in Adelaide, South Australia on April 28-30, 1989. The weekend was held in a facility used by the Anglican community for their weekends....

Editor's note: Many areas in the ILME family sent banners and showered the 17 weekend couples with 1200 letters of love! They received another 300 letters from the Anglican community.

Australia Update

Submitted by John & Lois Grosse, 2000

As we look back over the history of Lutheran Marriage Encounter in Australia from the vantage point of the year 2000, we do so with hearts overflowing with gratitude, but also with some sadness that the flame has not spread more rapidly. We are writing this history during the time leading up to the Olympic Games. In these 100 days before the opening ceremony the Olympic flame is being passed from hand to hand through 1000 towns and cities right across our land. It reminds us of how the torch of love has been passed on by so many loving encountered couples to reach us here.

We recall our first weekend in Adelaide 28-30, April, 1989 where there was an amazing outpouring of love and support (as already reported in the 1989 history by our workshopers Jim and Michelle Blase and also in the Editor's note).

We started out with only three presenting couples (Rod & Pat Pfeiffer, Bruce & Johanna Noll and clergy couple John & Lois Grosse). However two early weekends were presented by four couples. We were blest to have the encouraging presence of Fred & Gail Birch for that very first weekend in Adelaide, South Australia in April 1989 and Dave & Ada Dorn for our fourth Australian - and first Melbourne, Victoria - weekend held from 8-10 September that year. Our second weekend and first in the Australian Capital Territory was held in Canberra, from 16-18 June 1989.

Dave & Ada, who were International Lay Executive Couple, were in Australia in connection with Dave's United Nations' work. They also used their time here to visit the presenting couples and ME community in the various States. This would have been a big enough task just because of the distances involved, but it was made doubly difficult because of an airline pilots' strike at the time. While most Australians were grounded, Dave & Ada somehow managed to keep to their planned itinerary to where we lived in places as far as 1000 miles (1600 km) apart, even flying in a Hercules transport plane. They were then as now an encouragement to us all.

We have experienced much encouragement and love through many others as well as these two special couples. We experienced it right from the start when from April 1987 we were exchanging letters with Otto & Barbara Tollefson, International Expansion Couple, about the possibility of beginning Lutheran Marriage Encounter in Australia, and when Anglican clergy couple George & Judy Thomas (especially George) encouraged us to think of establishing a Lutheran marriage encounter in Australia and put the Grosses and Pfeiffers in touch with each other.

We experienced it from our Australian Anglican and Catholic counterparts who provided wonderful practical and financial support for our first weekends (see details, earlier report) also from Jim & Michelle Blase in Kansas as they lovingly workshopped us despite the long mailing distance between us - no email then! - as well as the generous

support from a specific District of the North American Region for each of us three couples to attend the Deeper in Columbus Ohio in 1988, and later from our international family who made it possible for our national Lay and Clergy execs to attend the International LME Board meetings. While there we were also able to attend Family Reunions. There are no words to tell how the wisdom of experienced marriage encounter leaders from the various regions lifted us up in the difficult times and inspired us to continue passing on the dream when we might otherwise have given up. There is no way in a report like this we can mention all of you who touched each of our lives but we don't forget you.

In the months following that first weekend Pfeiffers, Nolls and Grosses, with the support of couples from that first weekend and from the stalwart Lutheran couples encountered on earlier Anglican and Catholic weekends who had helped from the beginning, enthusiastically continued planning and holding weekends in the capital cities of three States and in the national capital. In addition, one weekend was held in the regional Victorian city of Ballarat.

The pace which was set led to cautions from those more experienced - and exhaustion, as our enthusiasm got ahead of our ability to recruit for the weekends, especially as the work fell on so few. Like other places we have struggled with the decision of whether postponing weekends where numbers are small is shepherding limited resources and preventing burnout, or pouring cold water on coals which might have been fanned into flame. After our very busy start we experienced the disappointment and disillusionment of postponed weekends among other difficulties, and not a single weekend was held in 1991.

However 21-23 February 1992 we filled a weekend at Mulgoa on the outskirts of Sydney for our first New South Wales weekend. That weekend was one of rejoicing as it marked the first time we'd had a full team of four Australian presenting couples. The two new presenting couples, Werner & Annette Wirz from Sydney NSW and Richard & Tiffany Waldhuter from Adelaide SA, had been workshopped locally. In taking stock after that weekend we noted that one hundred couples had completed Lutheran weekends in Australia.

In 1992 we produced our first edition of the Australian LME newsletter 'Love Notes'. It has appeared a couple of times since, but not on a regular basis.

By mid-June 1993 we had five active presenting couples including one clergy (Wirzes, Waldhuters, Zids, Nolls and Grosses) and two couples writing. As well as sharing their stories our newest team members Gaidis & Marja Zids brought their own considerable organisational and recruiting skills to bear and in this way too helped Marriage Encounter to flourish. At that time there were nine active spirals (love circles), three of which were combined with either Anglican or Catholic couples. Valentine's Day and/or December (Christmas) dinners were held in Sydney, Adelaide and Canberra. Outreach concentrated on the two neighbouring regional centres of Wagga and Albury New South Wales (NSW).

Rod & Pat Pfeiffer and Eric & Verna Fiedler had made their valued contribution as presenters on earlier weekends, and in the Pfeiffer's case also as first Lay Executive couple and a particularly energetic driving force for Lutheran Marriage Encounter in Australia.

In November 1993 Australasia was invited to become a region and we felt excited to think we had grown enough to take this step. The years 1994 to 1997 saw the peak of our Marriage Encounter activity and couple involvement, though the highest numbers of couples on a weekend remained with our very early weekends.

In 1994 our long-awaited Deeper was held from 30 September to 3 October at Gilbulla (NSW), Australia's most historic farm (now a retreat and conference centre). Oliver & Donna Nelson came with their special love and encouragement from Canada and presented this weekend to ten couples, along with John & Lois Grosse. We will never forget them. Gilbulla is a lovely old homestead and even the perfume which occasionally drifted from a nearby piggery couldn't dampen the romantic mood!

By then our presenting couples included a long prayed for second clergy couple, Mike & Narelle Fulwood (they first presented with the Grosses in clergy split talks on the August '94 weekend at Overdale), and their love, insight and wholehearted commitment has inspired much of what continues to happen for Marriage Encounter in Australia.

In June of that year (while trying to

complete their Deeper talks) Bruce & Johanna Noll - for so long a pivotal strength in Marriage Encounter here - had passed over their task as National Lay Executive Couple, held from September 1991, to Werner & Annette Wirz, whose enthusiasm and day-by-day dedication continued to keep the fires burning here when otherwise they might well have been extinguished.

The milestone for us of 200 couples encountered on Lutheran weekends was reached by the time our first full national board meeting was held in Canberra, 18-19 November 1995. To save expense previous meetings had always been held after our post weekend team meetings with whichever couples were there or available to come. They quite often went well into the early hours of the morning, especially before we became more familiar with our roles. Bruce & Johanna in particular were very good at getting back home with very little sleep as they often had to catch very early flights and then drive back three or four more hours to their then home in Port Augusta SA. At that November 1995 meeting the Grosses gratefully handed over the position of National Clergy Execs to the Fulwoods.

Inspired to encounter more couples on more weekends in more places than ever before we dreamed of encountering a further 200 couples in one year in this year 2000. Sadly limited people resources, less than hoped for responses to recruitment efforts, work pressures and burnout, as well as the need to rewrite talks to the new outline, all contributed to our not reaching that goal. Outreach to the State of Queensland too has been a long-term goal and over the years a number of valuable contacts have been made, though the effort has not resulted in a weekend there to date.

In 1996 five of six planned weekends across the south-eastern part of the country were held, beginning with a non-weekend during the week in Canberra in January at which we had five clergy couples among those attending. (They couldn't use the excuse that they were busy with Sunday services!) Our March weekend that year was in country South Australia in the foothills of the Flinders

Ranges. One couple brought three young boys and a baby with them as their baby-sitter was not available till the next morning. With TV set up in a room next to the conference room and their house very close by, that problem was overcome. Our volunteer cooks for the weekend were an Anglican encountered couple.

Because of the long distances most couples have to travel after a weekend the wonderful potluck suppers which were a feature of our first few weekends (where we were joined by Anglican and Catholic encountered couples) are now a thing of the past.

By June 1999, 300 couples had completed 24 Lutheran weekends in six broad geographic areas in four States/Territories. These are:

Sydney, NSW (at Mulgoa) Wagga and Albury, NSW (includes one weekend at Overdale) Melbourne and Ballarat, Vic Adelaide, SA Port Augusta and Melrose, SA Canberra, ACT

In recent years the emphasis has been on international contact and encouragement more through individual visits than attendance at Board meetings, particularly since Australia no longer has region status. We welcomed Matti & Anna Liisa Viitanen, then ILME Lay Executive couple in March 1998 and Anna Kristina & Tor Pytte in March 1996. Informal overseas input also came through Irwin & Donna Pudrycki while they were temporarily based in Adelaide for a time and we appreciated earlier unofficial visits from Trygve Eriksen, Gudrun & Arve Lund, and Gordon & Donna Zick, among others.

At present we have one clergy couple, Mike & Narelle Fulwood, and five lay couples committed to writing the new talks (though two of those lay couples are yet to begin writing because of difficult family or work circumstances). We plan a weekend in Sydney in May 2001. The two Rookie couples writing are Phil & Kerri Wegener in Canberra and John & Bonnie Wilksch in the Albury area.

We are grateful for the dedicated work of finance couples from 1989 till now: Kevin & Margaret Modra, Richard & Tiffany Waldhuter, Noel & Sharon Reid and Scott & Kathryn Little, and for the many couples who have taken on the booking-in couple role (and other tasks such as prayer couple coordinators) in the various places.

Continuing the work of Marriage Encounter here still falls on the shoulders of

a relatively few couples. In our enthusiasm we have always been in danger of overload and burnout as we spread ourselves too thin while attempting to find the resources needed for the challenge of reaching out in this vast land. We need and appreciate your prayers, as well as the personal encouragement which so many of you have supplied over the years. It's often been hard. But all the tears, all the struggles, all the difficulties have been worth it. Our lives have been changed by love. We've shared enormous joy and our world has been immeasurably enriched by those we've met and what we've learnt as we've worked to pass on the dream.

Each community has stories to tell. We remember, among others, the husband who on one of our early weekends said 'For years I've tried to get closer to my wife by discovering what she thinks. Now I know I just need to listen to how she feels.' And a wife who said with tears of joy, 'For the first time in my life I know I am loved.'

And of course we'll never forget our dear seventy-year-olds who reported at their Renewal how friends had come up to them as they were walking along holding hands in the shopping mall saying 'What's with you two? You look like a pair of recycled teenagers.'

We remember too how one couple running late for a weekend at a country retreat got hopelessly lost in the dark. They ended up at a motel miles away - from where we retrieved them very early Saturday morning after they had let us know of their plight.

Two of our favourite stories involve our presenters Geordie & Pamela Nelson and Ray & Joyce Butterfield and initially began with a difficulty. On our May 1994 weekend presenters Bruce & Johanna Noll couldn't come at the last minute because of Johanna's sudden illness, so rather than calling off the weekend at that very late stage it was arranged that local encountered couple Geordie & Pamela would read Bruce & Jo's talks (making it clear to the weekend couples that they were presenting the talks on behalf of Bruce & Jo). We were all amazed at how God used that to touch the couples in a special way; and we were overjoyed that experiencing the weekend again by presenting the talks led the Nelsons to write their own talks and become presenters. Their sharing has deeply

touched many others on weekends.

It happened again some two years later when Ray & Joyce Butterfield - then supply couple - needed to fill in for Werner & Annette Wirz in a similar way when Werner was unable to come to a weekend. The Butterfields too were inspired to become presenters and we have been greatly blessed by their loving participation.

While we don't recommend this as standard presenter recruitment strategy, we do note that often the couples who are asked to present a Renewal or Spiral presentation - and in this way immerse themselves again in their weekend - who stay most involved in Marriage Encounter work.

In the past eleven years we have experienced many difficult times, but most of all we have experienced many blessings. Our story is set against a background of a small Lutheran population and very large geographical distances (around 100,000 Lutheran church members in our total population of some 18 million in a country about the size of the USA). Our story is filled with the gift of love passed on to us from overseas as well as from the local Anglican and Catholic Marriage Encounter communities - which we all in turn have worked hard to pass on to others.

May there be many future Australian stories.

S. AMERICAN REGION

Excerpts from a letter from Otto & Barbara Tollefson submitted by Dan & Judy Teuscher 1989

Our interest in the gift of LME being offered in Brazil grew out of our original weekend in May, 1977. We were desirous of knowing how this great gift could be brought to the hundreds of Brazilian couples we knew through our work there over a period of eighteen years (1958-1976). Don & Karen Kurtz provided us with names of international contacts. On the eve of our departure in October, 1978, for Colombia and Brazil to lead a Mission Study Seminar for the ALC, we received two letters in response to ours and Otto was able to follow them up with phone calls while in Brazil. It was not our intention to "promote" anything, but

rather discover how and where the Roman Catholic ME was being offered and what, if any, contacts they had with Lutherans. We also hoped we could plant a few seeds of interest among our ALC personnel and Brazilian pastors and lay couples. The answers were encouraging and exciting. Since there are other couple movements in Brazil that are called something equivalent to "Marriage Encounter" in Portuguese, the Brazilian Roman Catholics decided to call themselves the "Encontro do Dialogo" (Dialogue Encounter) of Worldwide Marriage Encounter. Padre Jack Kennington, CSSR wrote: "Right from the start we opened our weekends to all faiths. So a fairly good number of Lutheran couples have made the weekend especially here in Ponta Grossa. By March of 1976 we were running our own weekends all in Portuguese. It has always been my dream to help set up ME weekends for any denomination that would be interested in running their own." In a telephone conversation with him, he was most excited about getting into contact with pastors and persons in our former parish in Joinville, State of Santa Catarina. He put us in contact with a Lutheran couple, Horst & Miriane Schnepfer. They furnished us with a list of 12 Lutheran couples from their congregation who had been encountered. At that time they were studying the possibility of having an ME weekend in their congregation. Their pastor was an ALC missionary. All this led to Brazil's first Lutheran weekend on September 16-18, 1983. Two of the teams were Ingo & Inge Klein and Otto and Barbara Tollefson.

