

OUR INTERNATIONAL

# Call To Be Family

Fall/Winter 2001

Volume 24 Number 2

God Bless  
is our refuge and strength  
AMERICA  
always ready to help in times of trouble  
So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come  
and the mountains crumble into the sea.  
Psalm 46:1-2

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*"Love one another as I have loved you"*



# Musings



## from the Morrisseys

Dearest Lovers,

As we were preparing our very first issue as editors of *Call to be Family*, we found it necessary to make some pretty drastic changes to the theme and focus we had planned to use *before* the terrorist attack on our homeland September 11, 2001. We had in mind a cover page and story regarding the celebration atmosphere of the North American Region Board meeting held recently in St. Louis. You will find that story in the following pages.

First and foremost, we decided that the focus for our cover *must* be, *had* to be a tribute to the martyrs of the holocaust that has befallen our United States of America. Yes, we call them martyrs—those who sacrificed their lives in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania—since they have indeed died so that the rest of us would see with keener vision the value of the freedom that we so blithely take for granted most of the time.

They died so we could cease blaming whole groups of people, nationalities and religious sects for the insane actions of a few isolated maniacs.

They died so we could once again pray and sing “God Bless America” and have it mean so much more than financial success and an easy life for a few of us.

Secondly, as we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas it is once again time to give thanks for all the gifts and blessings we have received from others. As an encountered couple for twenty-three years, we are thankful for all that our dialogue has given to each of us from the other. We are thankful for the love and joy that has come to us through our relationships with other encountered couples who have become as family to us. We give “Thanks—for the Giving” that has been a part of the Marriage Encounter experience for so many couples all over the world.

We invite you to join with us in prayer for continuing to find ways and resources to spread our dream of having more weekends in more places with more couples than ever thought possible in this new millenium.

We celebrate that hope with you, our worldwide family-in-love in this issue of Our International *Call to be Family*.

We love you,

Kay ♥ Bill



**W**e pray today that from the ashes will rise a new spirit of beauty and unity in America.

Already, all across this nation our hearts have been knit together into a new tapestry of one America.

Because of this tragedy, we have been bound together by a silver chord of hope and brotherhood and sisterhood.

What was meant to drive us apart has really drawn us together.

May we always remember.

And so today we ask, God, that you would wipe the tears of all in need of comfort.

That you would warm the heart of one who would grow cold from bitterness.

That you would lift the head of that one who is bowed down in sadness.

That you would touch the discouraged and remind them that love will always conquer hate.

We thank you, God, for making us such a resilient people. We know that we are.

And we pray now for the strength to rise again, to build again, and to live free from fear.

We pray that you will help us rebuild our broken lives and mend our broken hearts.

We pray that you will give us the courage to face evil and the faith to believe that good will never be defeated.

Hold us close to your heart.

And through our tears, and through our sorrow, may we all see a new vision of a new tomorrow.

Bless us all and God bless America.

by Reverend Wintley Phipps



**Ted and Marty Hartman & Jim and Anita Tollefson  
North American Region Executive Team**

## **MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER IN THE BIG PICTURE**

The events over the past weeks have given us good reason to reflect on what is really important to us. Perhaps our priorities shifted, as we realized that our relationships are a highest priority. We were compelled to call loved ones far away. We longed to be safe and at home with our families. We drew close to those we trusted to gain support encouragement and love.

We think Lutheran Marriage Encounter is an important building block in that foundation of healthy relational living. Marriage Encounter gives couples an opportunity to catch on to how important they really are to each other. They learn they can communicate on deep, intimate and risky levels. Above all, they learn the mystery of a God of love, who uses the model of marriage to teach us all about the power of this love. People who know, understand and are able to live these things are prepared to deal with whatever happens—the good, the bad and even the ugly.

We are thankful to be a part of such a ministry and honored now to serve as your Servant-Leaders in Lutheran Marriage Encounter. We recognize the tremendous power of our Lord as he uses us all to model his unconditional love and reaches out in love when we involve others in a weekend. We really are God's instruments of peace in a troubled world.

We know we don't have all the answers to the mysteries of relationships, healthy marriages and the Kingdom of God. But we do know a part of the answer. We know that the Lord is using the Marriage Encounter gift to change the world, one couple at a time.

We look forward to meeting these challenges before us, with confidence that our Lord is with us and that ALL of us are connected "at the heart."

Jim and Anita & Ted and Marty



**Marty and Ted Hartman  
Clergy Executive Couple**

# Introducing

## Our New North American Region Executive Couples



**Jim and Anita Tollefson,  
Lay Executive Couple**

### *Greetings from Ted and Marty . . .*

*We are so honored* to be serving with you as NAR (North American Region) Clergy Executive Couple. As we begin this partnership in ministry, it might be helpful to get to know us a bit.

We met and were married while attending Valparaiso University in Northern Indiana over 34 years ago. We have four wonderful adult daughters and their equally wonderful husbands. We are newly into “grand-hood” with a year old grand-daughter. Marty teaches in our Lutheran School and also works very part time at Wentle Vineyards. Ted has been a Lutheran pastor for over 25 years, serving in Temple City, Bakersfield and now Livermore, California.

*We were encountered* in 1979 at Lutheran High School, in Burbank, and still fondly remember sliding the twin beds together in that quaint former convent. We began presenting weekends in 1981. Over the years we have served as Area Clergy Contact Couple, District Clergy Couple and are currently writing to be Deeper Weekend presenters.

Some of you we already know well as we have shared weekends with you in a variety of capacities. Others of you we only know from our shared experience of a Weekend. We really are honored to be called along with Jim and Anita into this special relationship with you. For us, the feeling of “honored” is one that surfaces a smile. The feeling is light and spontaneous like winning the lottery. It sounds like people laughing gently at a moving story. It tastes like that favorite center in the chocolate you had only hoped would be there. We look forward to working with you!

**Dialogue Question:** *(You're surprised?)  
In what way am I “honored” to be married to you?  
Describe your feeling of honored.*

### *Greetings from Jim and Anita . . .*

*We were encountered* in April of 1981 in St. Paul, Minnesota, and attended our Deeper Weekend to become a presenting couple in March of 1982 in St. Louis, Missouri. We presented our first weekend in Minneapolis in August of 1982. By 1986, we had written all talks and were an Admin Team (old M.E. “speak” for Administrative Couple for the Weekend). We have now *lived through and SURVIVED* major rewrites and so far have presented 80 plus weekends.

We served as Area Lay Contact Couple in the mid 80’s, were District III Lay Contact in 1988-1990, and also served as North American Region Resource and North American Region Secretary Couple. In 1998, we wrote and presented our first Deeper Weekend and have presented three Deeper Weekends since that time. We just recently served again as District III Lay Contact Couple from 1998 to 2001.

*Our marriage* took place in August of 1974. In addition to being parents to five children, we are also grandparents of eight grandchildren. We live in Alexandria, Minnesota, about two hours northwest of Minneapolis, where we own and operate the Pillars Bed & Breakfast. Many times our guests have recognized one of our many M.E. symbols in our home and shared that they, too, have been encountered. One such couple was from Australia.

Jim is an independent sales representative, selling fire and safety equipment to fire stations. Anita works in the mental health unit of the local hospital. In addition to membership of a church in Alexandria, we have established a strong, wonderful love circle which meets monthly year-round. Our other interests include gardening, traveling, camping, fishing, reading and playing with our grandchildren!

The Phoenix is a fabulous bird in Greek and Egyptian mythology, dating to the 5th century B.C. Larger than the eagle and displaying brilliant red and gold plumage, it soars seeking the sun with which it is closely allied. Legend holds that this grand bird ends its life in flames - then rises from the ashes, fully resurrected to begin life anew.



Thus the Phoenix has become a symbol of rebirth.



Back row from left: Michael and Linda Edgar, Sandy and Mickey Preston, Rich and Jan Schleier, Bill and Kay Morrissey, Mary and David Kennicott. Front row: Justin and Kelly Sly

## A Celebration of New Life

Throughout the country, many Areas are beginning to experience a new life and growth. For the past several years in Phoenix there has been only the perseverance and faithfulness of Mick and Sandy Preston to hold the Community tenuously together and very few weekends were being presented. As the result of God prodding some people to move across the country and some mighty powerful workings of the Spirit, there are now four Weekend ready presenting couples!

At a recent presenting couple gathering, the future was celebrated with a laying on of hands for soon-to-be presenters.

Yes, the Phoenix Community is rising from the ashes. We are very much alive and gaining momentum! The weekend in April, 2001 was full with an eight couple waiting list. Eighteen of the twenty-four weekend couples attended their Weekend Renewal. Our Community meetings are averaging ten couples per gathering. Over 80% of the couples have attended at least one Marriage Encounter event since their weekend. Three couples—Justin and Kelly Sly, Michael and Linda Edgar, and Ray and Debbie Newhouse—have completed their homework and are planning on attending a Deeper Weekend on their journey to becoming presenters.

In addition to this, Todd and Nichole Ellingson have already begun writing the Junior Set of talks for Lutheran Engaged Encounter. The September weekend was full and powerful! Couples in attendance represented sixteen different Lutheran churches in Arizona. There are 12 couples already registered for the February, 2002 Weekend.

Along with the Spirit's leading and the willingness of some dedicated couples to go "the extra mile," the driving force behind the success of this renewal and rebirth has been the use of the *Interfaith Awareness and Publicity* materials.

The basic strategy is as follows:

### ♥ 12 weeks prior to the weekend . . .

Letters sent to all ELCE, LCMS and UCC churches in Arizona, directed to Clergy. Included in the letter were all the bulletin inserts and announcements for use in their Sunday bulletins and/or congregational newsletters, a few weekend brochures and an offer to come to their church to provide personal assistance.

### ♥ 5 weeks later . . .

A second letter goes out to the pastor thanking them for their help in making their congregation aware of the weekend and personally inviting them to attend a weekend, including a brochure.

### ♥ After the weekend . . .

Another letter is sent to the pastor thanking them for their help, informing them of the weekend's success, giving them the date of the next weekend and telling them they will be hearing from us again.

A new concept was also introduced:

### ♥ "The Five C's" - The Caring Couples Coffee Cup Community . . .



This strategy is carried out the first week following the weekend.

Each weekend couple is personally delivered a set of Marriage Encounter coffee cups by someone from the Community. Placed inside the cups are *invitations* to the *Weekend Renewal* and the next *Community Meeting*, two dialogue questions, a card with the next weekend date on it, and two brochures. Everyone in Community who delivered the cups as well as the couples who attended the weekend said this was a very important part of the weekend for them. It moved us from a discussion of "family" in Marriage Encounter from the words said on the weekend to warm-bodied, real live people at their front door. It made it all come alive for the couples.



Prestons Dig In

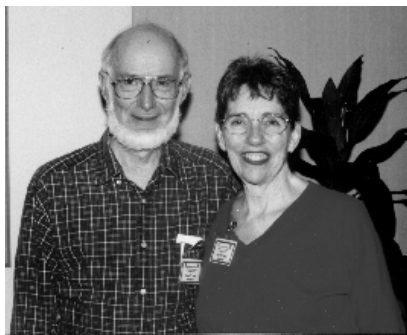
Sandy watches in a loving, supportive way as Mickey starts "digging" on the pile of work they face as AZ/NM Area Presenting Couple Coordinators and District IV Lay Contact Couple. Area Contact Couple is Rich and Jan Schleier and Clergy Contacts are Bill and Kay Morrissey.

## Phoenix Area Goes Ecumenical

Mary and David Kennicott were first encountered in a new Area startup weekend in June, 1987, in the United Church of Christ expression of World Wide Marriage Encounter. That startup weekend was assisted by encountered Roman Catholics and Lutherans who provided Community support, prayer couples and ongoing encouragement.

The Kennicotts soon wrote talks, began presenting and somehow managed to get involved in their Kansas City Area and Unit (or District) leadership. They served as UCC's National Lay Coordinators from 1996 to 1999. During this time they attended Rich and Jan Schleier's "dream planning" for the Interfaith Awareness and Publicity committee. Later, they fostered the involvement of Craig and Connie Leinicke in the development of Interfaith Awareness and Publicity materials.

Perhaps it is merely chance, but David and Mary like to think it was God's destiny that they moved to Sun City, Arizona a short while before the Schleiers moved to the



Phoenix area. There is not yet a UCC Marriage Encounter community in the area, so the Kennicotts have tried to assist in as many ways as possible in both the Methodist and Lutheran expressions in the Phoenix metro area. Currently,

they are major contributors to the resurgence of L.M.E. in Phoenix, serving as Registration Couple for the Arizona/New Mexico Area, Prayer Couple for newly encountered couples and Community supporters par excellence! They have written to the newest World Wide Marriage Encounter outlines and present weekends when they are asked to do so. David and Mary declare that their delight in seeing the transformation of a newly encountered couple remains unabated.

### Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

How do I feel when I receive an unexpected gift from someone I hardly know?

Describe your feeling.

When I receive an unexpected gift from you, I feel . . .  
This feeling is like how I felt when . . .

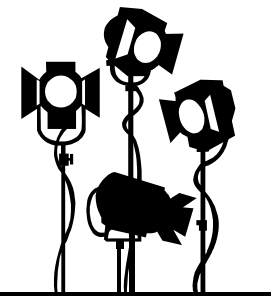
Describe your feeling as best you can.

## Bread of Life



Yet another innovative idea that was the brain-child of David Kennicott was the delivery of fresh baked bread to couples who attended the April Weekend in Phoenix. This "BREAD OF LIFE" concept was a tool used to invite and encourage newly encountered couples to volunteer as a Prayer Couple and/or some other loving task that is needed for successfully carrying out the Marriage Encounter Weekend. Several inspired Community couples drove all over the Phoenix metro area to personally deliver the warm, wonderfully aromatic loaves of bread. Included was a Love Letter with some specific tasks listed that needed to be filled for the September Weekend. The response to this was phenomenal with thirteen couples volunteering to be a Prayer Couple and all the loving tasks were filled.

# SPOTLIGHT on YOUR AREA



Due to the convenience and being closely involved in the process, we chose to feature the Arizona/New Mexico Area in this edition. It is our desire and hope to feature different Districts and Areas throughout our North America Region and International Areas in the Call to be Family magazine in future editions.

We know that some Areas are having some exciting and wonderful happenings—whether it is a rebirth of an existing Marriage Encounter Community or the forming of new Areas and Communities as an outreach from a parent Community—write and tell us all about what's happening with you out there!

It is refreshing and encouraging to share and celebrate the good things. Perhaps a spark of new life can be enkindled in Marriage Encounter Lovers who are searching and praying for some ideas to jump start a sagging local community morale or to infuse some new enthusiasm into their already thriving Love Circles and Weekend happenings.

Write to us at [BillnKay2@aol.com](mailto:BillnKay2@aol.com) or give us a call at 480-946-3440 to talk about the possibilities.



# North American Region Board Meeting

August 9-11, 2001  
St. Louis, Missouri

## Celebrate New Life!

“Celebrate New Life” was the theme chosen by the Bushes and Teuschers as they chaired their final meeting as Lutheran Marriage Encounter national leaders for this 25th Anniversary Gathering of the North American Region Board. Each day, devotional reflections, dialogue questions and open sharing were centered on “Miracles we have experienced in Marriage Encounter.” We came together first and foremost as individual couples committed to each other and ongoing improvement in our relationships, then joining our hands and hearts together in partnership with other couples all around the world with

a common vision and mission of changing our world into a more loving place, one couple at a time.

*“We came together first and foremost as individual couples committed to each other and ongoing improvement in our relationships . . .”*

An important part of the agenda was the election of a new Lay and Clergy Executive Team. This was no easy task since several extremely well qualified and capable couples were nominated for these national positions of leadership. The entire process was handled prayerfully and peacefully. As one person commented, we didn’t even have to worry about dimpled chads or pregnant ballots!

As observers at this meeting, the CTBF editors’ judgments are that it was a joyful and loving gathering. On Friday evening, we all celebrated the election of Jim and Anita Tollefson and Ted and Marty Hartman as our new North American Region Executive Team. They will be serving a three year term in this loving task, volunteering their time and energies to further our goals as do all couples involved in Worldwide Marriage Encounter in any way.

## The Torches are Passed



From left: Jim and Pam Bush, Dan and Judy Teuscher, Jim and Anita Tollefson, Arnie and Sue Kaestner (in back ) and Lynn and Jerry Brownlee.

*“Well done you good and faithful servants.”*

Heartfelt thanks in the form of hearty applause and gifts—tokens of appreciation—were presented to our servant leaders who served so faithfully and so well in their national and district positions. The presentations were made during the North American Region board gathering in St. Louis in August, 2001.

The Bushes and Teuschers have served as our NAR Executive Couples for the past three years. The Tollefsons are outgoing District III Lay Contact Couple. Arnie and Sue Kaestner and Jerry and Lynn Brownlee have held positions as District II Lay and Clergy Contact Couples.

*[Ed. Note: An updated and correct (hopefully!) listing of all leadership volunteers—international, national and local—can be found near the end of this publication.]*



Pam and Jim Bush and Dan and Judy Teuscher, retiring NAR Lay and Clergy Executive Couples, lay hands on Jim and Anita Tollefson and Marty and Ted Hartman during the installation and commissioning ceremony for our newly elected Executive Team in St. Louis.