

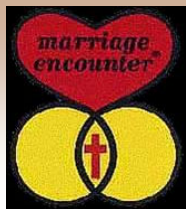
OUR INTERNATIONAL

CALL TO BE FAMILY

FALL / WINTER 2002

Volume 25 Number 2

BLESSED
TO BE
A BLESSING

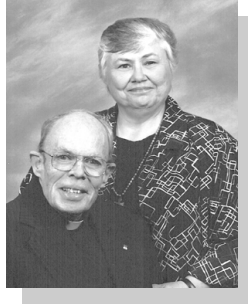


"Love one another as I have loved you"

--Jesus the Christ



Musings from the Morrisseys



Dear ILME Family~

Peace and grace to you whom God adores and abundantly blesses with love!

The 2002 Holiday Season is upon us. Is our focus on what we have and might lose—or what we take and we think we deserve, when others in the world are struggling without the basic necessities of life? Or, rather are our hearts and minds set on giving God, our Creator, THANKS for the abundance of the earth's resources we enjoy—conserving, recycling and honoring the harmony of the natural order of the universe? How are we sharing our abundance with the “have-nots” in our family, our community, our world? How do we personally and corporately respond to the words, “Blessed to be a blessing?”

In Lutheran Marriage Encounter, this has been a dominant theme and we have seen it in practice often. We have been privileged to know many couples, some as close friends, who see blessing others as a prime reason for the existence of ILME. Their continued involvement comes from a strong sense of being “blessed” and called by God to give of their time and energies, talents and treasures to be a blessing to others. They not only talk the talk, but walk the walk of being servants whom God uses to make disciples and followers in the way modeled by Jesus the Christ. We give deep and heartfelt thanks for you all—the bearers of love to a hurting and fearful world.

Recently on a visit to Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, Bill was wearing his shirt with a Marriage Encounter logo on it. The woman at the reception desk looked at him and said, “Are you involved in Marriage Encounter?” When he answered, “Yes,” she told him that she and her husband (Bill and Vicki Coombs) had been clergy presenters. Bill told her that plans were being made to start having weekends in Columbus again and would they like to be involved in some way. At this point, she said that her husband had died suddenly of a heart attack at age 44. She is now a student at the Seminary and will be ordained in two years. She then uttered this

powerful statement: “You know, when Bill died I had no sense that we had not lived our relationship to the fullness that it was meant to be. I credit Marriage Encounter for that because it was a real *blessing* for our marriage.”

Bill asked if she would be willing to share her testimonial with others and would she like to help with the renewal of the Columbus area. She responded with a firm “Yes!” Because she had been so blessed in her marriage by dialoguing, knowing and loving her husband so deeply, she is willing to reach out and pass on the blessings to others.

To us, this is a true meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas. We wish for each of you a deeper awareness and appreciation than ever before of God's blessings in your lives and the peace of God that cannot be comprehended in human terms.

With much love,

Kay & Bill

Symptoms of Inner Peace



A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.

An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.

A loss of interest in judging other people.

A loss of interest in judging self.

A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.

A loss of interest in conflict.

*A loss of ability to worry.
(This is a VERY serious symptom!)*

Frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation.

Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.

Frequent attacks of smiling.

An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.

An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.





GOOD “SPIRIT” NEWS . . . from your Executive Team

What a great spirit we have experienced in the Marriage Encounter community over these past months. “Spirit” is not easily described or measured. “Spirit” has to do with not only what you do, but also how you do it. “Spirit” describes the attitude and environment that a group of people generate. “Spirit” is something that you feel more than see directly. “Spirit” is the bubbles in champagne; the underdog team winning in the bottom of the 9th; the pizza delivered to the hospital room after a successful surgery.

We have experienced a great spirit of energy and enthusiasm for expansion in both the International community as well as the North American Region. The International Board is on fire for opening up new areas of the world in which to share this special gift we have received in dialogue. The NAR Board gathered around a map of North America; identified currently active areas and looked at potential areas for outreach weekends. The Interfaith Board is monitoring pilot innovative alternatives to sharing dialogue in areas where the traditional (weekend at a hotel or retreat center) approach may not work.

We have been part of an uplifting and informative Family Reunion with a “Spirit” that would be difficult to match. There was a top notch program, “spirited” fellowship, and rich small group sharing. We could feel the “spirit” as we sang our lungs out, laughed with abandon, and cried with others who cherish tears in the same way we do. What a GREAT Reunion! We look forward to Cleveland in 2004.

We have been part of a District leadership team focusing and planning for the future with great energy, humor, and commitment. These folks are trying new ways of delivering the same message in such a way that it gets through to contemporary couples. This “coffee cup” thing really works! They are excited about expanding into areas that have gone dormant and touching couples with the gift of dialogue.

We have also had a great time getting to know each other better. We are learning to depend upon each other’s gifts and to support and encourage each other. We have felt the Spirit of the Lord at work in our relationship. We have felt that same Spirit in our relationships with you. We are blessed!

(P.S. Check out John 3:8)

Jim and Anita Tollefson
Ted and Marty Hartman

Reunion Review

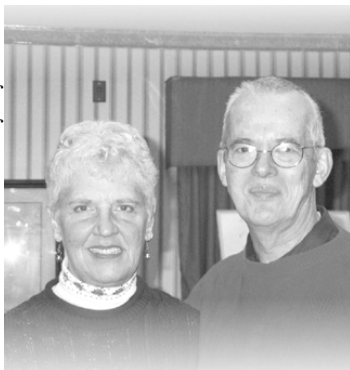
By Mark and Ginny Sims

Preparing for the 2002 ILME Family Reunion at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA this past August was similar to accepting any loving task in Marriage Encounter. There were the challenges of weaving the added activities into our existing life, finding out how to seek God's guidance and of course finding out who would be our volunteers. There was a lot of work for everyone. Because we had never attended a Family Reunion before, there was also a question in our minds of "what should a Reunion be like?"

On Friday night of the Reunion, we came in weary and with our eyes fixed on abstract goals and tasks. But during the Reunion, those abstract things melted away in the real world blessing of seeing all the couples engaged in listening to the speakers, greeting old friends, laughing with their whole hearts and sharing deeply with their spouse. The registration area was buzzing with smiles and hugs. As we looked around, it was a reward beyond measure! We were so busy enjoying the experience ourselves we were blessed and renewed before we knew it.

The Reunion began with an enveloping wave of praise and worship for our Lord. The musicians, led by Russ and Ann Hillman, played piano and percussion instruments to "Mighty Is Our God," "There Is Joy In The Lord" and "I Sing Praises To Your Name" plus many more. A warm wave of praise lifted our hearts to the Lord. God's presence was surrounding us.

John and Sally Duenow blessed us with a recounting of the "Legacy of ILME...Unbroken Chain of Spiritual Growth." They presented a clever skit to show how God has nurtured and woven this ILME ministry together over the past 27 years by using the commitment of individual couples



Sally & John Duenow

who chose to give of themselves because they had been so blessed by their Marriage Encounter Weekend. They gave because they first received. We were all struck by how every person in attendance had sometimes labored under a heavy load for ILME. Hearing the stories made us aware of how we truly were "One in Spirit." As we give ourselves today in this ministry of LOVE, we can remember the first presenters who had the same struggles as we do, but also had to cook and serve the meals for the participants!

We were in awe of the committed serving of countless couples for over 27 years and felt honored to have the Duenows share their experiences as part of that very first presenting team in Spokane, WA. We can now see how our own serving becomes a thread in a grand tapestry of God's plan for marriages.

Included on Friday night's program was a presentation by Dave & Ada Dorn and Otto & Barb Tollefson sharing news about ILME's outreach to other countries. Mickey and Sandy Preston talked about servant leadership as they recounted the story of the recent revival of the Phoenix area.

After we had dialogued on Friday night, we visited with friends in our "Family" and were reunited with our children who had been having fun swimming in PLC's pool and playing games led by the staff of Camp Lutherwood from Bellingham, WA.

Saturday morning started with a Matins service led by our Reunion musicians, some "Hug Therapy" and Prayer Circles. Our guest speakers were David and Teresa Ferguson of Intimate Life Ministries in Austin, Texas. We were blessed with their honesty and humor. We laughed and also were awed by the way they revealed from scriptures "What God wants from our marriage." Some insightful concepts were:

- God is always looking for a channel to be present to us. Marriage can be that channel. God's presence was made known in the Pillar of Fire, leading the Israelites out of Egypt; the burning bush; the human—Jesus the Christ. God wants to be known and present on earth through our loving hearts and the loving ways we treat each other.
- Christ will come along side us and teach us how to love our spouse! They used the illustration of an oxen yoke. It has two spaces, in which the farmer puts a trained ox with an untrained one so the inexperienced one will learn from the other. (Matt. 11:29) Jesus wants to be yoked with us in order to teach us how to love our spouse!
- God will reveal to us our spouses unique needs so we can minister to them.
- How do we minister to each other's needs? The first thing Jesus did was to weep with those who were hurting and then took care of their needs. (John 11:35—the story of Lazarus.)
- There are needs behind our feelings. Marriage is a matter of the heart, emotions and feelings. Our marriage is alive and needs to be nurtured or it will become dead and filled with "doing things."
- Do we want to react to anger with anger—or minister to the hurt in our spouse.



(“Reunion Review “ continued . . .)

- Matthew 25:40 says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” How we treat our spouse is how we are treating Jesus.

After each presentation, we were adjourned so we could write and share our feelings.

The only thing left to do on Saturday night was to party! We ate Pacific Northwest salmon and beef tenderloin and danced the night away. Ron and Pat Olson were our dinner hosts. There was a fairly equally divided group of people from each decade of the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s. The smallest contingent was from the new decade of the 2000’s--but they were the best dancers!

Sunday was our time to “Embrace Our Future, Where Dreams Have No Boundaries.” Our leadership couples—Dan and Judy Teuscher of ILME, Jim and Anita Tollefson and Ted and Marty Hartman of NAR and Kari and Anna Alander of EUR (all the way from Finland!) spoke of the future vision of International Lutheran Marriage Encounter; how we will keep the vision alive. The message was simple...we must live it! We need to peel back the stresses of life to love our spouses more deeply. We must be bold enough to embrace sharing our joy, letting our light shine, loving our neighbor and passing on the blessings we first experienced on our Weekend.

We closed on Sunday with a beautiful communion worship service and message from Ted and Marty Hartman. We closed with our ILME “national anthem” *There’s A New World Somewhere* and of course a great big group hug!

A special THANKS to all who prayed for the Reunion. Your prayers were heard and answered richly! When accepting the challenge of coordinating a Family Reunion, the first thing that becomes evident is that it will not happen without the special contributions of the community around us. Yeah, Loving Couples! The second thing which became clear is that we had to Let Go and Let God work out our paths. Yeah, God! Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to see how You work out details in Your way. Thank you for the chance to join together in community and be lifted by seeing all the smiling faces joined in prayer for marriages everywhere.

Your 2002 Family Reunion Coordinators,
Mark and Ginny Sims



“How do I feel when we have looked outward together as a couple to serve God in a big way?” (Describe feelings in loving and vivid details.)

Special THANKS to our Coordinators for the 2002 Family Reunion. . .

Airport Meet & Greeters/Saturday night MC’s:

Ron & Pat Olson, Mountlake Terrace, WA

Children’s Programs:

Staff of Camp Lutherwood, Bellingham, WA

Cruise to Alaska:

Otto & Barb Tollefson, Olympia, WA

Dorm Rooms / Saturday Eve Celebration Decorations:

John & Crystal Hansen, Olympia, WA

Glenn & Jayne Patrick, Tumwater, WA

Finance / Pre-registration:

Mark & Kari Hooper, Gig Harbor, WA

Golf Scramble: Ron & Kristen DeYoung, Gig Harbor

Photography: Kirk & Fran Clapper, Lake Stevens, WA

Bruce & Shirley Mullikin, Sequim, WA

Prayer Vigil: Mike & Laura Brieske, Stanwood, WA

Publicity: Carl & Dallas Presley, Gig Harbor, WA

Registration Table: Al & Joanne Ruff, Edgewood, WA

Room Banners /Tote Bags:

Carl & Harriette Groth, Snohomish, WA

Silent Auction & Gift Shop:

Ted & Susan Buethe, Kent, WA

Souvenir Shirts: Mark & Beth Jones, Gig Harbor, WA

Speakers: Jim & Detra Swenson, Vancouver, WA

Travel/Stays: Luke & Donna Lucas, Tacoma, WA

Website Guru:

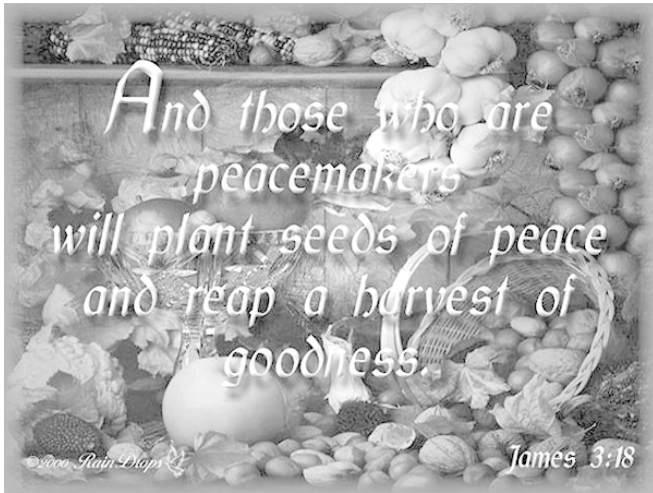
Todd & Crystal Waetzig, Federal Way, WA

Worship & Music: Russ & Ann Hillman, Gig Harbo



Mark and Ginny Sims did a wonderful job of organizing the Reunion. In the photo with them as they receive a plaque of appreciation from the ILME Family are:

(l to r) Susan and Ted Buethe, Dallas and Carl Presley, Ginny, Mark and Willy Sims, Kari Hooper (Ginny’s sister) and Ann and Russ Hillman (who served as MC’s, worship leaders and spoke on the Power of God’s Love.) All of the above were on the District V Reunion Committee along with many others. Thanks, District V, from all of us!



WEEKEND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Each District is being encouraged to hold an enrichment day/weekend opportunity for encountered community couples, as well as presenting couples. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to be on the receiving end of another weekend experience, different from the Marriage Encounter weekend. The weekend opportunities include, but are not limited to, the Discovery weekend, Languages of Love, the Deeper weekend, and the Bridges programs. Even attending a district, national or international reunion is a source of renewal and enrichment for your relationship. Of course, attending another weekend is also suggested, especially if you have not experienced the new weekend format.

As these opportunities are scheduled across the country, we will provide dates, formats, locations, and how to register. To date, the following districts have these opportunities scheduled:

District III — Building Bridges Between Two Hearts,

Oct. 18-19, 2002, Country Inn & Suites, Albert Lea, MN.

To register, contact:

Chuck & Nan Roberts

chas231@hotmail.com

District IV — The “Deeper-Deeper” Weekend
(for active presenting couples only)

Feb. 21-23, 2003, at Embassy Suites, Phoenix, AZ

Contact Mick & Sandy Preston for information: Mickersam@cox.net

Thank You

Six couples retired from service to the NAR Board and were recognized for their leadership and dedication to LME. Five new District leaders will attend the Jan. 2003 NAR meeting and will be commissioned at that time. Those leaving at the August meeting were:

- Dist. I Lay Contact -Bruce & Maryann Breslin
- Dist. I Clergy Contact – Tom & Robin Cogan
- Dist. II Lay Contact – Rich & Sandy Giro
- Dist. III Clergy Contact – Bruce & Ila Zellmer
- Dist. V Lay Contact – Ron & Pat Olson
- Dist. V Clergy Contact – Otto & Barb Tollefson

Thanks to all of you!



The new District II Lay Contact was commissioned at this Board meeting. They are **Jeannine and Allen Gray**, pictured above.

*A toast to
Texas
leadership in
District 2 !*

