

OUR INTERNATIONAL

Call To Be Family

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"Love one another as I have loved you"
—the Risen Christ





Morrissey's Musings

Called to be Transformed

The Lord said, "...I do not judge as people judge. They look at the outward appearances, but I look at the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7

Suffering, dying, rising to New Life....that is the God Call to which we are drawn each season of Lent, Holy Week and Easter. How do we get to where we are able to live out Christ's suggestion....OOPS! ...Christ's COMMAND to 'Love one another as I have loved you'? We are tempted as humans to short circuit the journey from being our ego self (SELF-centered) to being our Christ self (OTHER centered). We want ever so much to be able to bypass the painful sufferings of losses of ALL kinds, and thus skip the seasons of passion ("*passio*" which means suffering) and horrific death to our ego, which is the core of our self-centeredness. We long to go straight to the EASTERS of our lives, and the smooth sailing that image symbolizes for many of us. In fact, does anyone REALLY want to devote their life to following the "still, small voice" of a God who says and shows us that it is more important to love your enemies—even to die for them—than it is to conquer and dominate them? If you can't find the irony in this, and the incredible counter-cultural stance it proclaims, then the whole point of Lent and Easter has been missed.

Martin Luther urged people to make the sign of the cross each morning upon arising. Why? I believe it is to remind us of what Jesus would do if we are faced with a person and/or situation that is our "stumbling block" to being more Christ-like this day. The Cross asks us to face our greatest enemy of all—the enemy of SELF that resides at the core of our being. One way to do this is to journey with others and intentionally probe the depths of who I am at my center. If I avoid this inner journey of self discovery, I will never, this side of my physical death, be able to truly experience the eternal joy of the EASTERS of

my life in the here and now. That is, I will see my crosses transformed into empty tombs and make redemptive the many sufferings, dyings and risings to new life. On the Marriage Encounter Weekends, we talk about how we are transformed by our covenant love for each other. As LOVE transforms me more and more into the Christ likeness for which I was born, I experience new levels of intimate relationship with self, God and others. This, then, is how I will live into the Easter of "loving others as Christ loves me."

In the love of
the Risen Christ,

Kay & Bill

Legend of The Dogwood Tree



When Christ was on earth,
the dogwood grew
To a towering size with lovely hue.
Its branches were strong and interwoven
And for Christ's cross
its timbers were chosen.
Being distressed at the use of this wood,
Christ made a promise
which still holds good:
"Not ever again shall the dogwood grow
To be large enough for such a tree,
and so
Slender and twisted it shall always be
With cross-shaped blossoms for all to see.
The petals shall have bloodstains
marked in brown
And in the blossom's center
a thorny crown.
All who see it will think of Me,
Nailed to a cross from the dogwood tree.
Protected and cherished this tree shall be
A reflection to all of my agony."

—author unknown

*The print on the cover page is titled
"A Legend's Promise" by Roberta Wesley.
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Jim and Anita Tollefson

Making A Difference



Marty and Ted Hartman

Dear ILME Lovers,

What a joy it is for us to experience the power of couples like yourselves, moving under the strength of the Holy Spirit, making a difference in relationships and churches. We are finding that the real impact in Lutheran Marriage Encounter occurs when a single couple or perhaps two couples are inspired to do something that causes positive and sometimes dramatic change.

We are blessed with a pretty workable international organization, fine local and international publications, a well presented video, and committed leaders throughout. It seems as though all of these provide an environment where the real action takes place. Someone reads an article in Call to Be Family about an area that was renewed. They think to themselves, "We can do that here as well!" They arrange presenters and negotiate a facility through Area leadership. They start calling churches and other encountered couples locally. They light a spark that allows others to get involved. Before you know it, there is a weekend with freshly encountered couples glowing with new love and prayer couples excited by being part of the miracle. An entire local area has been blessed, and it started with one couple who was inspired to make a weekend happen.

We have seen that same kind of single couple (that sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it) initiative applied to creative recruitment techniques, love circle projects, and dialogue challenges. Out of this initiative come wonderful blessings for everyone. A couple has made a significant difference.

We suspect that somewhere in this issue of Call to Be Family, you may find one of those little spark points. You may say to yourself:

- 1) "We can do that here in _____ too!"
or
- 2) "I wonder if anyone has ever thought of _____?"
or
- 3) "What do you suppose would happen if _____?"
or
- 4) "We haven't had a weekend here in a long time. Let's call _____ and put one on!"
- 5) "Do you suppose our missionary friends in _____ would want to put on a weekend there?"

Your Area and District leaders are excited to work with you in all kinds of ways so that you can make a difference. Bug them with a plan for weekends in your local or an outreach area. Continue to fill up Bill and Kay's E-Mail with ideas that have worked in your area. Every once in a while dialogue on: "If we knew it wouldn't fail, what new idea would we implement in Lutheran Marriage Encounter?"

Excited to be Making a Difference
with you,

Ted & Marty Hartman

Jim & Anita Tollefson

CIRCLES of LOVE

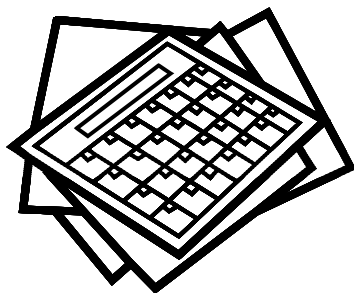
This edition of “Call To Be Family” is focusing on one of the most effective ways encountered couples have found to keep alive and growing the love and strengths in our relationships that we rediscovered on our Marriage Encounter Weekend. That way is by joining with other encountered couples on a somewhat regular basis to share 10/10’s, open sharing, friendship, FUN and LOVE!

The following articles were submitted by couples just like you who have found ways that WORK to keep their relationship a priority in their lives. These local ongoing support groups are known by a variety of names...love circles, love spirals, community nights, or any other combination of terms that becomes a local “tradition.” These small groups exist for us to come together as couples to dialogue with our spouse, to share our struggles, joys and visions for loving one another as Christ loved us. We support and help with giving LME Weekends in our area in order to fulfill our common dream of being God’s heart, hands, feet and voices—changing the world to a more loving place, one couple at a time.

SEVEN SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

*by Orval and Bernell Moren
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- We have discovered that SIX COUPLES works best for a Love Circle, seven at the most. There are several reasons. In a two hour meeting, everybody has time to share at least once, and feel comfortable sharing. Most houses have room to accommodate 12 people, even if some one must sit on the floor.
- We try to select couples from a GEOGRAPHIC AREA. No one usually wants to drive too far. It’s just easier to be close to one another. Fifteen miles, we think is the maximum distance.
- At the first meeting of our Love Circle, after getting acquainted, we have a PLANNING SESSION. This is extremely important. Otherwise, one couple gets stuck with all the planning and leading. We use a calendar and everyone makes a copy of the schedule. We select homes and dates for an entire year. We ask couples to consider making a one year calendar commitment. After that year is finished, then we renew, and add or subtract new couples who want out or in, and plan a new year and restart the Love Circle.



- We ROTATE in our homes for each meeting. Usually, we meet on the same day of the week or month, and we set a beginning and ending time for each meeting, and encourage promptness.
- The couple in whose home we meet becomes the host. The HOST COUPLE remind the couples of the date and the place by phone or e-mail.
- They are in charge of leading the evening, and usually they will do the devotion—usually a Scripture and prayer, or a devotional reading. We all bring a snack of some kind. We close the evening with prayer.
- We select our MATERIALS during that first meeting. We have used a Gary Smalley video, or Love Circle Six that we wrote, or a resource material already prepared for us. Consider Gary Chapman’s, *The Five Languages Of Love*, or books by Les and Leslie Parrot are outstanding. The Host Couple leads us in the materials selected. But, whoever does the presentation might want to be negotiated for each meeting. We always do a 10/10, and a have a sharing time.
- Finally, we try to BE HOSPITABLE, good and kind, and encouraging to each other! If someone seems to be dropping out, we don’t let it happen unless the circumstances are such, that continuing to come is impossible. Uphold, and uplift and HAVE FUN!

