NORTH AMERICAN REGION

CALL TO BE FAMILY

DBA Lutheran Marriage Encounter

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January 18-20, 2024

Hello NAR Board Members,

This package provides the minutes of the NAR Board Meeting that was held January 18-20, 2024, in Mesa, Arizona.

The minutes record the proceedings of the meeting. We attempt to avoid repeating the contents of the prepared District and Staff reports, so please read the entire package for completeness.

**Please Note:** The posted reports are prepared before the meeting for presentation and discussion. Concerns, requests and proposals may be modified during the meeting, so the reports attached to the minutes may not reflect decisions of the board. Matters of consensus are recorded in the minutes.

**Next NAR Board Meeting:** The next NAR Board meeting will be virtual on April 20, 2024.

The **Distribution List** for these minutes is as follows: NAR Lay & Clergy Execs, NAR Staff, District Lay & Clergy Execs, Area Lay & Clergy Contact Couples, European Region Lay & Clergy Execs, ILME Chair Couple.

To accommodate distribution of the minutes, the contents will be organized into several sections for easier downloading and printing. The minutes are available to all presenting couples, at <https://godlovesmarriage.org/continuing-the-journey/resources/presenting-couples/>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NAR Board Meeting Minutes January 2024

**Reports**

2023 Finance Report 1-12-24

Central District Report to NAR January 2024

Comm Devel Report to NAR Jan 2024

Eastern District Report January 2024

Experience Development Team Report January 2024

January 2024 NAR Media Report

NAR Agenda January 2024

NAR Board of Directors January 2024

NAR Executive Report January 2024

NAR Staff January 2024

Western District Report January 2024

**Post Meeting Additions**

Finland Reunion Information

NAR Community Development small group notes 1-19-24

Interfaith Roster Updated January 1 2022

**Attending NAR Board Members:**

Hartmans, Prestons, Fells, Guynns, Pedersens, Steinkes, Coles, Redmans, Rickses.

Guests: Brian and Annika Piazza.

Thursday, January 18, 2024 7:00 PM

Opened with couples introducing themselves and telling where they live and their astrological signs.

**Welcome and opening prayer** by Mick Preston.

**Relationship Celebration** – Couples played a get to know others game, led by Marty Hartman.

**Devotion** –Singing led by Leah Cole, devotion led by Ted and Marty Hartman, Lamentations 3:22-23. Use the bad as an opportunity to learn and grow, do not run from the darkness, but enjoy the light.

**10/10 question** – As a couple, what new beginnings are we facing right now, HDIFAT? Couples shared writings with their spouse, then shared with their prayer partners.

Meeting was closed. Library (social) time was held.

Friday, January 19, 2024 8:30 AM

**Devotion -** Began with prayer by Kevin Guynn, song led by Leah Cole. Followed by devotion by Guynns.

**Approval of July 2023 meeting minutes**. Jill Steinke moved to approve, Linda Pedersen seconded. Approved by consensus. It was suggested that in the future approval would be by email a short time after minutes are published. Approved by consensus.

**Community Development Team** – Hartmans, Piazzas

A short video presentation was given by Annika Piazza. 3 teams were formed for small group discussion. Questions for the groups: What kind of Community connections do you hope for? What former/current activities in your District or Area have been inspiring in developing Community? What methods have worked for your District/Area to stay in contact with participants immediately after an experience? Do you have any ideas on how we can collaborate as a North American Region to encourage Community?

After the teams had time to discuss, a representative from each group gave a summary of results. Answers included: don’t be a toxic community – for example one person dominates the group, encourage by example, no gossip, share ideas you use at retreats with others, encourage direct contacts such as with cards and emails, open to unencountered couples, make it about marriage, have a host couple that follows up with next invite, Zoom quadralogue, be flexible, combine meetings with retreats, okay to be fun, take part in multiple community groups, be ecumenical, assign a couple to shepherd each newly encountered couple.

**District Reports**

Eastern District – Fells, Guynns

See attached report. Jean mentioned the prayer scroll which is available on the GodLovesMarriage.org website. It includes the names of couples around the world that are praying for the weekends as they are happening. Many couples don’t know about it. Hanging the scroll in the meeting room can be powerful to the couples being encountered. Pennsylvania area is struggling due to illness and aging of area couples. Eastern Canada has been working with other faiths with success.

Central District – Steinkes, Pedersens

See attached report. They are now taking reservations for an ME Experience to be held at a church. The couples will go home at night - or make their own hotel arrangements. Linda will lead church on Sunday so the pastor can participate in the Experience. They are working towards less emphasis on Areas and more as a District or even national level. We need to share presenter couples as needed to help keep things going.

Western District – Coles

See attached report. Leah mentioned the lack of presenters in their District and the need to work with other Districts. They hope to hold a destination event soon to build enthusiasm to get ME going again. Prestons will be attending Best Practices to do a presentation in Phoenix, February 22-27, 2024. These events include a large number of pastors and church workers. The District has a lack of community couples to support weekends, organize prayer couples, etc., but are not giving up, keep pushing.

Lunch

**Staff Reports**

Finance – Redmans

See attached report. No major changes. Post weekend reports need to be in correct formats. There have been some issues with getting payment information from the website, but it is fixed now. Be sure to send Dean a pre-weekend list 30 days out so he can compare it to the post-weekend lists.

India funds in the Dream Fund, account 1012, need to be de-allocated due to events not happening. Consensus was given for this. The money will go back to Dream Fund general account.

Publicity/Media – Steinkes (Leinickes, not present)

Google search is changing. You need to pay to get to the top of search lists. The team will get quotes on options to drive traffic to the website and then share with the executive team. Encourage all couples to share the Facebook page and QR code and use these to promote events and Experiences.

The workbook has been updated to the current Lutheran Adaption Outline and waiting for the artwork to be completed by Jason and Craig.

Sandy asked for updated bios from the NAR District leaders and European leaders to be posted on GLM. Send to Prestons.

Executive Report – Prestons

See attached report. ILME European Region has revised three of the presentations and translated them into English. We are looking forward to see what they have done. We hope to make videos of couples talking about LME at the next in person meetings, with Leinickes.

\*\* The NAR execs request a mission grant to the Eastern District in the amount of $5000 to support their Eastern Canada Area during their transition in structure. We commend the Area for their collaborative efforts with the Mennonite Brethren Marriage Encounter in Eastern Canada and their recent successful experiences. \*\*

Consensus given for the grant after a short discussion.

Break

**Team Reports**

Marketing Development Team – Steinkes

Let Connie know the names of couples that are willing to do videos about their experience. They are working on a list.

Experience Development Team – Prestons

See attached report. Please update your District list of current weekend ready presenters and send to Prestons. This will assure accuracy, and be updated on GLM to use as a resource if you need presenters for a weekend.

Community Development Team – Hartmans

See attached report. One change to report, the virtual Journey Group mentioned in the report is for all encountered couples, not just presenters.

Virtual Development Team – Pedersens

Two virtual events were held in 2023. Three couples shared an AirB&B to participate and it worked well. One of the couples has joined the virtual Journey Group. Pedersens are willing to train other presenters on the virtual experience details.

Small group team discussion – How do you see the development of our product going forward? What do we have to offer? How do we make it work in the current world?

Most of the other marriage groups have funding, we do not. For example, Weekend to Remember has large groups, separate sessions for men and women, around 200 people in attendance, and are sponsored by Focus on the Family.

After the small groups had time to discuss, answers were shared: The outline is not specific to one denomination, the new outlines are better, we need to try to cut total time, maybe make Friday night optional and use as time for couples to get settled, and have more social interaction, encourage non-residential events - need to have space for 10/10 times, share the schedule ahead of time so couples are prepared, tell them in advance that a donation will be requested, adaptations are okay and not specific to Lutherans, the InterFaith Board is dwindling, develop podcasts, write a book about our stories, keep Christ at the center, make weekends more fun, what is the product?-modeling relationships and teaching partnerships, how do we stop cancelling weekends?-have a backup plan even if we only have one or two couples, What separates our product from the rest?-intimate setting, accountability, relationship, dialogue, real Christ centered, marriage intensive, most spiritual relationship next to your relationship with God, ME-authentically modeling a Christ-centered marriage, offering intimacy and accountability in a marriage intensive setting.

Open discussion followed. Ideas included - rather than cancelling, help the couple get to another location for a weekend, LME pays for their travel, or presenters go to the couple and give them a short version. Set up a virtual event with them.

Meet with prayer partners

Dinner

Small group discussions – new groups

How do you see GLM/LME becoming more ecumenical? Be specific.

What would be some advantages and disadvantages?

Results – ecumenical means Christian, protestant, one man and one woman, would we have officers of other faiths, would clergy presenters still need to be Lutheran or could we use other faiths to make the presenting team, we could lose consistency in the outlines since others have not revised their talks, use your areas to make a weekend happen even if you need to use other faiths, have joint organizational meetings, should we join National and United Marriage Encounter, this might give us expanded resources and more help plus a larger audience, suggested to broach the Catholics with “what if” we were to ask for release or if we were to leave.

Open discussion – How will the Catholics react to us asking to join with others to just be protestant, will they be okay with us changing the outline, what does our $500 annual license fee under WWME actually cover, can we be released possibly with a grace period to get organized, let’s start inviting couples to weekends even if they are not Lutheran and get other churches to advertise our events.

Presentation – Prestons

Seeds of God - What is your plan for planting the seeds of a GLM experience in your area in 2024? Briefly describe. What do I/we need to do to make it happen? What are my feelings about my plan?

Write your answer, then share with your prayer partners as a quadralogue.

Library Time

Saturday, January 20, 2024 – 8:30 AM

Open with song led by Leah Cole and prayer led by Ted Hartman

We connected via Zoom video with Anna and Kari Alander from Finland. They shared information about the reunion being held in Finland, July 19-21, 2024. This will be more relaxed than past reunions, due to the short planning time. They will focus more on visiting with others - and have less structure than usual. Registration should be available in about two weeks. The program will be in English, Swedish and Finnish. Transportation to and from the airport will be available. A short PowerPoint presentation was shared, and is included with the minutes.

Next NAR Board meeting will be virtual on April 20, 2024, beginning at 10:00 AM, Central time.

Next in-person NAR Board meeting will be August 15-17, 2024, probably In Cleveland, Ohio.

Other Business – open discussion.

Work in your Areas and Districts to locate other encountered couples of any faith. Get to know them and work together to keep Marriage Encounter alive. Some discussion on if we are open to other non-Christian faiths, such as Jewish, same sex couples and other variations. Opinions varied within the group.

Break to check out of hotel rooms

Sending service with communion – led by Ted Hartman

Closing and Lunch

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan and Charlotte Ricks, NAR Board Secretary Couple