

**LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER
NORTH AMERICAN REGIONAL BOARD MEETING
DISTRICT 1 REPORT as of March 1, 2016**

District Lay Contacts	Stephen & Sue Rufe
District Clergy Contacts	Ed & Emily Kast
District Presenting Couple Coordinators	Fred & Julie Schamber
District Secretary	Kevin & Raye Guynn
District Finance	Dean & Marcia Redman

STATISTICAL INFORMATION:

Presenting couple strength:

Clergy = 6	Clergy writing	= 0
Set 3 = 6	Set 3 - writing	= 2
Set 2 = 3	Set 2 - writing	= 3
<u>Set 1 = 5</u>	<u>Set 1 writing</u>	<u>= 0</u>
Total: 20	Total Writing	= 5

Weekends held since last NAR Meeting (April, 2015):

Apr. 10-12, 2015	Toftrees Golf Resort, State College, PA, 10 couples encountered
Apr. 17-19, 2015	Comfort Inn, Battle Creek, MI, 7 couples encountered
Aug. 14-16, 2015	Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Solon, OH, 4 couples encountered
Sept. 18-20, 2015	Spruce Lake Retreat, Canadensis, PA, 19 couples encountered
Oct. 2-4, 2015	Comfort Inn, Birch Run, MI, 8 couples encountered.
Oct. 16-18, 2015	Heritage Hotel Lancaster, Lancaster, PA, 13 couples encountered.
Nov. 13-15, 2015	Hotel Millersburg, Millersburg OH. Self-pay: Avg. cost \$265/couple included \$125 food pkg. At 14 couples we elected to go with 4 presenters, but, with understandable excuses, the numbers decreased to 11. It was a powerful w/e, and financially successful.
Feb. 26-28, 2016	Clarion Hotel, 101 Fantasy Harbour Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, SC, 11 couples encountered. Facility Cost: \$4417.56, WE Receipts: \$3915.00.

2015/2016 Weekends cancelled since last NAR Meeting:

Apr. 24-26, 2015	Beachwood, OH (Fairfield Inn & Suites) - 4 registrations
May 15-17, 2015	Huntington, NY (Immaculate Conception Seminary) - 4 registrations
Sept. 18-20, 2015	Hillsborough, NC (Holiday Inn Express) - 4 registrations. Couples referred to WWME and Methodist Weekends. All couples contacted for Feb. 2016 Weekend.
Mar. 4-6, 2016	Stratford, Ontario, Canada (Arden Park) - 4 registrations

Upcoming 2016/2017 Scheduled Weekends:

- April 8-10, 2016 Heritage Hotel Lancaster, Lancaster, PA \$325/couple
- Apr. 15-17, 2016 Fairfield Inn, 3750 Orange Place, Beachwood, OH 44122
\$279/couple inclusive food/rooms/tax/service
Open to the hearing-impaired (min of 2 couples to bring in signers)
- Apr. 22-24, 2016 Baymont Inn and Suites, 7447 Convention Blvd, Warren MI 48092,
Facility: \$182, Food: \$55 per couple. Cancellation 30 days out.
- Apr. 22-24, 2016 The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College, PA ~~\$330~~ \$325/
Couple. (A \$5/per couple donation given. We think asking for \$490 will be more
effective than having to ask for \$515.)
- Sep. 16-18, 2016 Spruce Lake Retreat Center, Canadensis, PA -- \$2,000 deposit
\$339/couple
- Sep. 30-Oct 2, 2016 Quality Inn, 2590 Capitol Ave SW, Battle Creek, MI 49015, Facility:
\$178, Food: \$50 per couple. Can cancel up to a week before.
- Oct. 21-23, 2016 Olmsted Retreat Center, Ludlow, PA -- \$330 deposit \$266/couple
- Nov. 11-13, 2016 Hotel Millersburg, Millersburg OH 44654
Self-pay: Est \$265/couple included \$125 food pkg, same as 2015's
- Mar. 10-12, 2017 Comfort Inn Birch Run 11911 Dixie Hwy., Birch Run, MI 48415,
Facility: \$194, Food: \$75 per couple. Can cancel up to a week before.
- Mar. 24-26, 2017 Arden Park Inn, Stratford Ontario, Canada. No quotes yet.

DISTRICT 1 MEETING SYNOPSIS

September 25-26, 2015 - "What if..."

Our District 1 Leadership meeting took place on September 25-26, 2015 in Middleburg Hts., Ohio. District Leaders, Staff, and Area Leaders from the Carolinas, Michigan, Ohio, Ontario, and Pennsylvania were present. In addition to our couple-couple prayer partner time, Area, District Leadership, Staff, NAR, and Interfaith Reports; peer-to-peer discussion time; and worship together; our meeting focused on "The Power of Prayer and Positivity."

For the 25 days leading up to the meeting, board members participated in a daily 3 part prayer challenge project. The 3 areas of focus were our ministry responsibilities, our marriage relationship, and ourselves as individuals. The key questions that each person answered to begin the challenge were: "what are the greatest challenges I face in my areas of responsibility in LME, what are the greatest challenges I face in my marriage relationship, and what are my greatest personal challenges. After answering the questions, each person prayed daily about these areas of their lives (throughout the month of September) laying each before the Lord and listening for His direction. All were asked to take notes from the insights of their meditations and prayers. At different times throughout the meeting we met in couple-to-couple, small group, and large group for prayer and discussion of the different areas of focus. Kasts led the wrap up.

The topic of same-sex and non-married couples wishing to attend or showing up at LME Weekends was again addressed as per discussion at the last NAR meeting. Simplified, the discussion results were that first and foremost all individuals and couples are to be treated with love and respect, and that pre-Weekend calls (vs. email/USPS contact only) are encouraged to avoid surprises at the registration table on Friday night of the Weekend. The Board drafted and adopted a couple of simple response/policy documents which are included as bullet points below:

- **A simple response to same-sex couple Weekend inquiries & Applications:**
We're so sorry; we're an organization designed only for heterosexual married couples. If you wish, we can give you a copy of our policy statement and references to organizations that may better serve your relationship needs.
- **Lutheran Marriage Encounter Policy Regarding Weekend Participation Eligibility:**
Lutheran Marriage Encounter weekends are designed to strengthen the marriage of a man and a woman. The program is not designed for other marital or non-marital relationships. We are licensed under World Wide Marriage Encounter, and our license limits us to serving heterosexual, monogamous couples on our weekends.
- **Same-Sex and/or Non-Married Couples' Programs/Websites:**
 - Couple Enrichment** – <http://www.couple-enrichment.com/>
These weekend-long "intensives" are given by married therapists and are held in Orangeville, Ontario. They are open to all couples, married or not, heterosexual or not.
 - Heart to Heart** – www.heart.mn.cx or www.hearttoheartmn.org (information as of Fall, 2015);
"Inclusive" since 1994, their programs value and welcome all committed couples: same-sex and opposite sex, married and unmarried.
 - Power of Two** – www.poweroftwomarrriage.com/
An online "membership" costing \$18/month, which any couple (there are single memberships too) can use to develop relationship resources.
 - Relationship Journey** – www.relationshipjourney.com
Programs developed by a marriage specialist for individual couples. These are resources, not events.
 - Marriage Mansion** – www.marriageencounteronline.org
Materials online to be used at any couple's convenience. Complete DVD and printed information available.

The Prorated WE Cost document and WWME Invitation to Mission Summary were also discussed.

Reminders/Action Items:

- Update all outstanding WE Application Brochures to \$100 application fee.
- Update Area's progress of the District's 50 new \$10/10 pledge campaign to D1 Finance (Redmans).
- Send all finalized Post-WE Lists to Rufes for updating of the D1 Encountered Couples Database. (Only names and email addresses of couples who authorized being added to the database should be submitted).
- Send all names and email addresses of couples wishing to be removed from the Encountered Couples master database to Rufes to be forwarded to Leinickes.
- Send current Area Activities, Electronic WE Information Packets, and Journey Group contact information to D1 Lay Contacts for Leinickes to publish on GLM/CTG website.
- Send WE Contract copies to D1 Finance (Redmans).
- Work to re-establish Finland partnerships.
- Report all CCLI song usage at any LME venue/activity to D1 Lay using CCLI Song Usage Reporting Forms.

Next Meeting is scheduled for June 10-11, 2016 at the Fairfield Inn & Suites in Beachwood, OH.

DPCC, Finance, 2017 ILME Family Reunion Update Report, and D1 Rosters are being forwarded as separate documents.

Consolidated/Condensed District 1 Area Reports

AREA: Carolinas

Co-ALC and Co-APCC: Dean and Marcia Redman, Ken and Gina Schiess

AREA REPORT:

The Carolinas are struggling. The future of ME weekends is questionable! We have no clergy, but have been very blessed with clergy (John and Connie Heinz and Ted and Jane Guthrie) who take vacation in conjunction with our scheduled weekends and consider the extra time to present on the weekend as part of their vacation thus eliminating travel expense. We've had only one weekend in 2015 and it was very unusual as reported last meeting, but it is one of our joys! The weekend had been cancelled due to low #'s, however, we then received 3 registrations and we rescheduled the weekend. Clergy and hotel were both available and the weekend was held. The group was small but bonded - even taking pictures together at the end of the weekend. Due to the last minute rescheduling we did not have a 1st or 2nd set of presenters so the weekend was done with the clergy and the admin couple. It is not ideal but certainly workable!! It turned out to be a wonderfully, blessed weekend! The lesson from it is to be flexible and persevere. Put the weekend into God's Hands.

In scheduling our 2016 weekend in Myrtle Beach, connection was made with a clergy in MB and the clergy has whole heartedly supported the weekend with publicity and encouragement in his congregation. We have been contacted by a couple who was encountered in TX many years ago and who now live in MB. They saw the publicity in the church bulletin and have volunteered to help with the weekend on Friday night. We are anxious to meet them.

We are also blessed with a Presbyterian couple who has been the prayer couple coordinators for the Carolinas for many years. They are willing to continue that loving task for our upcoming weekend.

Our support help is minimal and many tasks are being done by the two presenting couples.

There are 2 admin presenting couples in the Carolinas. Ken and Gina Schiess have not completed the rewrites and do not plan to finish. (They will be presenting on the Feb. 2016 weekend with talks they have completed.) Redmans have rewrites completed (and will travel).

The future of the Carolinas is questionable! With lack of clergy, only 2 presenting couples and low registrations the enthusiasm is waning. Perhaps 2017 we will consider scheduling a weekend.

CAROLINAS REPORT SUBMITTED BY: Dean and Marcia Redman, Ken and Gina Schiess

AREA: Florida

Contacts: Bob & Darlene Kail. The Florida Area remains inactive.

AREA: Michigan

ALC: Brian & Donna Zelner, ACC: Ed & Emily Kast, APCC: Don & Judy Christiansen

MI AREA REPORT:

Our 2015 Veterans' Renewal was blessed by several Lansing couples (Mark & Cindy Martin, Fred & Barb Roush, Joel & Vicki Dulebohn, Orv & Lynne Erickson) & one of our Saginaw couples (Jason & Carla Hurd) hosting the presentations and activities. Our Sunday service was wonderfully presented by Pastor Ed & Emily Kast. They all did an awesome job presenting Dr. Gary Chapman's book, "When Sorry Isn't Enough" which he co-wrote with Jennifer Thomas. The couples worked really well together and began planning back in January of 2015 which meant Brian & I could relax and know the task was in good hands!

We were able to meet with our Supply (Bob & Lisa Duffer) & Admin Couple (Don & Judy Christiansen) to streamline our weekend supplies and go over procedures. This gave us a chance to have some great fellowship and get refreshed & organized all at the same time.

Our Saginaw Journey Group has graciously volunteered to host the presentations for our November 4-6, 2016 Veterans' Renewal. Ken & Deanna Warren used to plan & host all of our Michigan Veterans' Renewals for years and when she passed away several years ago our Michigan communities agreed to rotate the responsibility among the three Journey Groups which works out quite well for all of us.

Our Michigan LME Family Campout will be held August 12-14, 2016 at Lake of Dreams Campground in Merrill, MI. The theme this year will be "Honor Thy Father & Mother."

In our Kalamazoo Journey Group we are blessed by couples taking the initiative to host some of the meetings at their homes which is a nice change.

On a sad note, Bob & Sandie Cain have retired as a presenting couple for our Michigan Area. They have been a dedicated and passionate couple for many years and we have been blessed tenfold to have them be on our Michigan Presenting Team. They do still intend to remain as active as their health allows them to be.

As for challenges we still struggle with getting newly encountered couples to participate in the community.

Prayers for three of our couples who are writing: Jesse & Shannon Hogue, Bob & Lisa Duffer, & Brian & Donna.

Prayers for Kalamazoo as our city endured a multiple shooting the other night that left six people dead, one critical and one injured.

Prayers for health concerns for many of our couples who recently had back surgery, diagnosed with Parkinson's, diabetic issues, etc.

One of the major goals for this year would be to get our writing couples written. We would love to get back to using four couples on a weekend so new couples can have the opportunity to present. We also hope to start up a Journey Group in the Jackson area; we may have a couple interested in doing so.

MI REPORT SUBMITTED BY: Brian & Donna Zelner

AREA: National Capital

APCC: George and Janeen Wadzita

AREA REPORT:

A monthly Spiral couples' small group continues to be active in the Tidewater area of Virginia. A core group of five couples (primarily former presenting couples) regularly attend the monthly Spirals and at least five other couples attend occasionally. The Spiral generally meets the third Saturday of each month, with the host couple rotating among the active couples. There was a summer picnic in August, a Christmas dinner and ornament exchange in December, and a Super Bowl party in February, all hosted by Jim & June Harvey.

The Wadzita's started rewriting the Set 1 and 2 weekend talks to the CPO outline in early 2015; however they have been unable to progress. George's elderly parents have medical issues requiring his presence and support. The Wadzita's request a leave of absence from presenting, but hope to resume writing later in 2016 or 2017. Jim and Kim Granger have retired from the presenter list. There are no new couples currently writing talks nor scheduled to attend a Deeper Weekend.

Our annual Summer LME picnic and Christmas ornament exchange are planned for 2016 in addition to monthly Spirals. The Wadzita's' goal is to resume writing Set 1 and 2 CPO by 2017.

NATL CAPITAL REPORT SUBMITTED BY: George & Janeen Wadzita, APCC

AREA: New England

ACC: Bob & Linda McGurn

AREA REPORT:

The challenge is finding ELCA pastors who will publicize a "non-inclusive" event, and LCMS pastors who will publicize anything that involves an ELCA pastor.

We still have two active circles, and were even able to add in a couple that recently attended a RC weekend.

Our goal is to keep the circles going and recruit couples to attend PA weekends.

NE REPORT SUBMITTED BY: Bob & Linda McGurn

AREA: Ohio

ALC: David ♥ Jean Fell, ACC: Jon ♥ Bonnie Bell, APCC: Steve ♥ Sue Rufe

AREA REPORT:

This has been a year of pain as we witnessed the declining health of Lynn Goggins, who eventually died on February 2 from multiple myeloma, leaving behind Jeff, Sam 19, Felicia 15, and Gina 10. Read their blogs to know God's faithfulness: <http://noticinggodinallthings.blogspot.com>.

Since the Fall report Ohio has been ticking over, meeting twice as a board, with these activities:

- Park Family Pumpkin Party in October (This is open to many personal friends too, but is a great "excuse" for encountered couples to gather, often bringing kids and grandkids)
- The "reunion" planned specifically for the November W/E was postponed twice due to Lynn Goggins' decline because the Goggins were hosting it.
- Wine tasting & romantic dinner in February was attended by 13 (3 pre-encountered, and only

AREA: Ohio (continued)

3 of these 13 were members of the APG, which shows the wide draw of this event)

We work hard with Leinicke Group to keep email church addresses current (we ask for a list of those that bounced/rejected and research new ways to connect). We aim to send one more email to churches for each Weekend, either before the eblast or after, as a reminder.

A local e-newsletter "Connections" has gone out 3 times since the last report, highlighting immediate next dates and events and referring occasionally to GLM resources (which we HOPE have now been updated for Ohio). In late November one of these Connections encouraged donations, and was based on Ed & Emily's letter.

The APT (Area Planning Team) has been holding steady (one changeover on Prayer Chain coordinators), committed and faithful. Two "newer" couples have become regular at KYRAP events and may be asked to join. We have tried to involve "one more" couple to help with events, and this is working well.

Sadly there is nothing Interfaith to report beyond our continued willingness to help the local BME clergy to write to the CPO outline; local Roman Catholic community is not responsive to our communications.

Scheduled activities:

- March 11-13 Annual retreat has 29 couples registered (20 from OH; 9 from PA/MD)
- April 15-17 Weekend
- May 21: W/E Follow-up at 3:00 in Eastlake then Lake County Captains Game at 6:30
- June 18: KYRAP Workshop in Parma, to be led by Jon & Bonnie Bell
- Aug 5-7: Annual campout and family fun day (for encountered families only)
- Oct 8: Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Road Rally - something new!!
- Oct 29: Park Family Annual Pumpkin Party
- Nov 11-13: Fall Weekend (a follow-up will be planned for December or January for this)

Sadly our presenting strength decreased with the untimely death of Lynn (♥ Jeff) Goggins, who had presented first set a few times while in seminary and were intending to rewrite as clergy. When we have a Weekend with hearing-impaired couples, we bring in a fourth "presenting" couple (BME's Ron ♥ Mary Jo Mohlmaster). Currently there is no one actively discerning presenting.

2015's pattern has become our annual goal: to hold at least one self-pay w/e, one "traditional" w/e, and one "other" non-residential experience, for which we are actively seeking a host. We aim to provide an enrichment/fellowship/reunion after each M.E. Weekend, and to provide personal follow-up to each newly encountered couple done by the presenters for that particular W/E, and to continue a variety of events throughout the year.

Since Lynn's death, the Goggins are obviously not able to present, although Jeff expressed an interest in continuing in the ministry, which will not be ruled out.

OH REPORT SUBMITTED BY: David ♥ Jean Fell, Jon ♥ Bonnie Bell, Steve ♥ Sue Rufe

AREA: Ontario

ALC: Keith & Pauline Mueller, ACC: Richard & Linda Holm, APCC: Keith & Pauline Mueller

AREA REPORT:

Active Journey Groups in Kitchener/Waterloo, Woodstock, New Hamburg/Wellesley & Georgian Bay.

Loving Task couples got together for a BBQ in July 2015.

We are struggling to find couples to fill few Loving Tasks. Rising W/E facility costs and finances are ongoing concerns. Goal is to find new registration and W/E Coordinator couples.

ON REPORT SUBMITTED BY: Eigil & Sheila Hillerup

AREA: Pennsylvania

ALC: Fred & Julie Schamber, ACC: Vacant, APCC: Lloyd & Joanne Wertz

AREA REPORT:

High Points:

Post Weekend event: A great event was held last fall with 6 long-time supporter couples of PA Marriage Encounter spending a weekend in a huge house on the lake in Deep Creek, Maryland. Relationships were strengthened, and we hope this will result in the planning of some post-Weekend activities.

Weekend applications: Our April Weekend in Lancaster, PA, as of 2/18/2016 only has 2 openings left. Lancaster was a new location last year—this seems to suggest to us again that branching into new areas can bring in increased applications. Also we encountered 19 couples at the Pocono Weekend last fall which again suggests that holding Weekends off-season at “destination” locations can bring in more applications.

Concerns:

Prayers requested: Prayers are requested for our Registration Couple, Larr and Denise Etzler. Besides Denise fighting cancer, Larr has been laid off from his job and has not been able to find a new one. They are in the process of losing their home and moving in with his mother. Also our Lancaster Prayer Couple wife, Dennean Ludwig, is still struggling with a crippling illness that is still undiagnosed.

Regarding post-Weekend activities: Because our couples attending a given Weekend are so spread out geographically, we have not been successful in planning any post-Weekend event for a given Weekend.

Regarding Weekend costs: We have received a couple of inquiries regarding Weekend costs. Besides the application costs going up to \$100, the www.GodLovesMarriage.org website says under “What is cost?”

The per couple value of your Marriage Encounter Weekend ranges from \$375 to \$515, depending on prevailing lodging and catering costs in each location. On Sunday afternoon of your Marriage Encounter Weekend, you will be given the opportunity to make a confidential free will contribution to help Marriage Encounter pay for the lodging and catering costs of your Weekend.

AREA: Pennsylvania (continued)

Even though it does stress that their financial contribution is free will and financial circumstances should not prevent them from attending, we've gotten a couple of calls saying they can't afford \$600, so it makes us think this may be a factor in smaller number of applications.

We are not covering costs for Weekends so we totally get why it is necessary to make couples aware of expenses; however, it seems that we are caught in a Catch 22 that if we don't encourage larger contributions by letting them know the costs, we may run out of money; but if we publicize the costs, our applications may be down enough that we won't have enough couples to hold Weekends. Don't know what the answer is.

The other question regarding this is that the website says that their contribution is to help Marriage Encounter pay for "the lodging and catering costs of your Weekend" and tells them how to find the cost of their Weekend to budget for it. Meanwhile, the outline tells 3rd Set couples that we are to tell couples: "We aren't asking them to pay for their Weekend; we are asking them to sacrifice for the sake of other couples..." Maybe to avoid the contradiction, the website could say something less specific like: "...help cover the costs of Weekends so that Weekends can continue to be held." Just a thought.

Regarding the upcoming changes in the outline: Looking at the list of changes to be made, it appears that it is almost entirely cosmetic—just standardizing the Roman numerals, correcting a couple of errors where it says to refer to a section and then gives an incorrect section, and adding 5 minutes or so to some writing times, etc. So I think we need to stress that they estimate that noting the changes should only take an hour or so, and perhaps not call it the dreaded word, "re-writes" as there is no re-writing involved, and just the word "re-write" can cause some to decide to retire.

AREA GOALS:

We have scheduled 4 Weekends for 2016—2 spring ones and 2 fall ones. We decided to go ahead with the number we have been doing with the knowledge that we may have to cancel some with application numbers being down. We now have a Presenting Couple Coordinator in PA (the Wertzes) and are starting to train our other PA presenting couple (the Laceys) regarding the Lay Contact Couple job. We're hopeful that the 6 couples who did a mini-retreat last year will be able to plan another one this year. We met with 2 couples regarding presenting, but circumstances in their lives have prevented them from going forward at this time.

PA REPORT SUBMITTED BY: Fred & Julie Schamber

District 1 Report Lovingly submitted by,

*Stephen & Sue Rufe & Ed & Emily Kast
D1 Lay Contacts District 1 Clergy Contacts*