

**LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER DISTRICT REPORT TEMPLATE
FOR JANUARY 27, 2018 VIRTUAL NAR MEETING**
**(PLEASE SEND YOUR REPORT DIRECTLY TO ALL NAR BOARD MEMBERS AND DPCCS
NO LATER THAN JANUARY 20, 2018)**

ROSTERS:

Please attach current rosters to your report (date as of January, 2018).

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTERS SCHEDULED: (By Area within your District)

Dates City/State Facility Additional Information

Central Illinois (CIL) Area:

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
04/13 – 04/15	Peoria, IL	Quality Inn 4112 N Brandywine Dr Peoria, IL 61614	
10/12 – 10/14	Peoria, IL	Quality Inn 4112 N Brandywine Dr Peoria, IL 61614	

Dallas/Ft. Worth (DFW) Area:

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
04/13 – 04/15	Dallas, TX	Wyndham Dallas Suites – Park Central 7800 Alpha Rd Dallas, TX 75240	
08/03 – 08/05	Dallas, TX	Wyndham Dallas Suites – Park Central 7800 Alpha Rd Dallas, TX 75240	
11/02 – 11/04	Dallas, TX	Wyndham Dallas Suites – Park Central 7800 Alpha Rd Dallas, TX 75240	

Indianapolis Indiana (IND) Area: [NEW]

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
04/20 – 04/22	Indianapolis, IN	Comfort Suites Indianapolis 2750 Fortune Circle West Indianapolis, IN 46241	Outreach weekend of District II

Northern Illinois (NIL) Area:

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
11/09 – 11/11	Rockford, IL	Baymont Inn 662 N Lyford Rd Rockford, IL 61107	

St. Louis (STL) Area

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
04/20 – 04/22	Dittmer, MO	Sojourn Retreat Center 8350 Hwy 30 Dittmer, MO 63023	
11/02 – 11/04	Dittmer, MO	Sojourn Retreat Center 8350 Hwy 30 Dittmer, MO 63023	

5 POINT-GOLD STAR THRUST TO THRIVE UPDATES:

What are you doing/planning in your District/Areas to thrive in the following 5 areas. Include applicable personal, couple, Area, and District endeavors.

Prayer:

DFW - *We encourage prayers for LME, our community, Weekend attendance, post Weekend participation at every meeting and with each communication to community.*

NIL – *We appreciate the continuing prayer chain by Kerns; daily prayer; letting other communities circles and areas know in advance of weekends so they can offer up prayers and write sharing letters.*

Personal Development:

DFW - *Our annual planning meeting is set for January 27. We will discuss Weekend plans, community activities, post Weekend activities and opportunities, and service/promotional activities.*

NI – *Clergy and Lay quadralogue monthly strengthening their connection .*

Pre-Encounter Excellence:

DFW - *We are working to promote attendance at post-Weekend activities as well as attempting to keep some line of communication open with community, especially couples from the past two years Weekends.*

NIL -- *A letter is sent to registering couples within 24 hours of registration; a phone call is made to each registering couple a week before the weekend. We send out a "save the date" note to churches in surrounding areas along with several publicity announcements for the churches to use in their newsletters and bulletins. Serious attempt is made to find prayer couples who will attend the close of the encounter experience. NI Area planned a booth at the ELCA Congregational Resourcing Event last March and plans booth in March of 2018 whereby contacts are made, names are collected. District II reached out to renew the holding of weekends in Indiana. The first weekend is planned for Indianapolis April 22-23, 2018; a hotel is procured and contacts have been made with a local encountered lay and clergy couple; at this writing, four couples are registered.*

Encounter Excellence: *(This meeting's focus).*

DFW - *We work to provide a class environment, with professional documentation, and authentic talks and presentations. Our focus is on the couples and their needs, as well as their progress throughout the Weekend*

NIL --*We are evaluating switching the order of the first two/three talks. Also last November weekend showed us a need for permission to post couple names, phone, and e-mail on a list to give to all participants at the close of a weekend; we are developing a form for this. We have received requests for "Weekend Agendas" at the beginning of a weekend; in order to allay the anxiety of those who request this, we will prepare one and have them ready for those who ask. We piloted new table questions in November; they worked exceedingly well to encourage more lively participation with relaxed laughter. We provide little encouraging "gifts" during weekend such as hearts with sayings on them, butterflies with transformation saying, frogs for "Fully Rely on God," foam door hangers with encounter sayings made by communities just to share our love and interest. Last November we made the Saturday evening meal a romantic dinner serving a choice of wine or sparkling juice; this one glass serving of choice was met with appreciation by the couples adding to the festivity of the meal. Also meals were catered except for breakfast. Food was ordered and community members picked it up and dropped it off at the weekend. This allowed for more choice at meals, the food tasted great, and this was much less expensive than hotel meals.*

STL - *We held two LME weekends in 2017-April 28-30 and November 3-5. They were held at the Sojourn Christian Retreat Center in Dittmer, Mo.*

********Our April weekend had 6 couples. Presenters were Teuschers, Leinickes and Bates. Jim & Edie Leible were the On-Site Host Couple.*

********Our November weekend had 7 couples. Presenters were Teuschers, Leinickes and Nielsens. On Site Host Couple was Tom & Kathy Von Behren.*

Post-Encounter Excellence:

CIL - *Here in Central IL we had a fall weekend. Being able to hold a weekend is always good, but getting couples to join in with the journey groups is always a tough go. Once again we can only plant the seed. We*

don't know what is really going on in their lives. We had a couple that was encountered two years ago reach out and join us. We have a spring weekend planned. Our journey group still meets every month with five couples or more. It is always a boost.

DFW - *Our annual planning meeting is scheduled for January 27.*

NIL – *We invite weekend couples to circle meetings and try to put them in contact with circles when they live out of state or some distance away from the weekend site. In hope of keeping people connected and enlightened and motivated, Clergy Contact sends out a monthly e-mail for one year to couples completing the weekend.*

STL - During and after each weekend couples were encouraged to attend the Weekend Reunion. In both cases 3-4 couples attended the Reunion Wine and Cheese Party. There was much couple and community growth during the fellowship time. Also couples were encouraged to become involved on a deeper level with LME in the area.

From the weekend several couples attended our once a month Journey Gatherings and seem very enthusiastic about becoming more involved in our local LME weekends and community. We will continue to nurture this excitement. We are prepared to start an additional Journey Group if interest warrants it.

ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS/PROJECTS/BEST PRACTICES:

DFW - *Our annual planning meeting is scheduled for January 27.*

NIL – *We piloted a new Loving Task Form to send to existing circles in the Indiana Area and NI Area to help support the new reach-out weekend there. This was e-mailed the first part of January 2018.*

ENRICHMENTS/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:

DFW - *Our annual planning meeting is scheduled for January 27.*

NIL - District II Lay and Clergy Contact Couples send out a “ME SPIRIT” news bulletin to district leaders asking leaders to forward the Spirit on to all others in their area in hopes of keeping all involved people in the know and connected. *We held a local hand-fasting ceremony to celebrate World Marriage Day and to encourage the local ME community.* We set up a booth at the Northern IL Synod Congregation Resourcing Event at Kishwaukee College in Malta, IL. Pastors and laity talked with community couples, picked up brochures, and signed to receive information and to advertise weekends. We were surprised to hear that many present were not aware of ME. We have a lot of work to do.

STL - As previously mentioned we have monthly Journey Group gatherings. Attendance varies and we are hopeful that newly encountered couples will continue to attend. Also, each January, during Martin Luther King Holiday weekend, we hold an LME Romantic Getaway for previously encountered couples. This year's event was held January 13-14 at Pere Marquette State Park and Lodge in Grafton, Illinois. 10 couples attended and enjoyed a video presentation and some 10 and 10's.

We had a LME display table at the Professional Church Workers Conference in November held at Tan-Tar-A resort in Osage Beach, MO. We had a great opportunity to speak with many pastors, principals, teachers and directors of Christian education personnel. Many took brochures, a pen and signed up for a drawing to win a free application fee for a future LME Weekend. We obtained their email addresses and other information for our data base for future publicity.

One of our couples met with the Mission Committee of their congregation asking for their backing and financial support for taking Marriage Encounter to India. The request was received enthusiastically and funds were put in the congregational ministry program and later approved.

CPO ACTIVITIES:

DFW - *We try to keep close contact with the Catholic, Methodist, and Episcopal couples in our area, integrating activities when possible.*

NIL – *We contact other faith expressions at times in an attempt to find journey groups within proximity to those couples finishing the weekend. We are now searching out and contacting encountered couples – even from other expressions – in Indiana Indianapolis Area for support of the upcoming reach-out weekend in Indianapolis*

STL - The same couple met with the Catholic Sectional Leaders' annual meeting and shared about taking the WWME Lutheran Expression to southern India. The Catholic leaders were so joyfully excited about the project that they gave over \$700 to help the designated Indian pastor leader to observe a Weekend while he was still in the U.S. We will continue to keep the Catholic Sectional leaders up-dated on the project.

VARIETY OF MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCES:

DFW - *Our Weekend at the retreat center was not as big a success as we had hoped.*

There was no private place for couples to use for sharing if they were "non-resident."

The work load on our small active community was more than the Area is willing or able to sustain.

We will return to hotel Weekends in the immediate future while seeking other opportunities for non-residential Weekends and other opportunities.

PRAYER CONCERNS:

DFW - Of course, our concerns are for more participation prior to, during, and after Weekends. We really need more couples inviting and participating in putting Weekends together and building a viable post-Weekend program so we can not only fill Weekends, but support couples post-Weekend as well.

NIL - That we all "hang in there" with God's strength because the need for the ME ministry is still high.

OTHER UPDATES TO SHARE (Optional):

STRENGTHS AND HOW WE APPLIED THEM:

WEAKNESSES AND HOW WE ADDRESSED THEM:

SUCCESSSES / PROBLEMS SOLVED / OBSTACLES OVERCOME:

CHALLENGES WE FACE / PROBLEMS THAT NEED SOLVING:

NIL- People complete weekends and rate them positively but are unresponsive thereafter for the most part when we contact them. ("Been there, done that attitude?") Any ideas for overcoming this obstacle?

The last talk seems to have many repetitive parts. Is there a thought to bring this issue forth to the Catholics as we did with Feelings?