**DISTRICT REPORT – LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER NAR**

**January 21, 2023 Meeting**

**Eastern District: Submitted by David & Jean Fell and Kevin & Raye Guynn**

**Presenting couple roster with status: Attached**

**Past M.E. experiences held since last report with number of couples completed:**

Battle Creek Michigan, Sept 30-Oct 2 Ended up being a terrible facility, with many complaints. 4 started, 2 finished.

Lenox MA Nov 4-6 – 9 registered, 7 started & finished

Streetsboro OH Nov 18-20 4 registered, 3 finished.

**Future M.E. experiences planned for 2023:**

Birch Run MI March 10-12

[Niagara Falls, ONT April 21-23, Guthries leading, & presenting Clergy, seeking Canadian

presenters from Anglicans in Western Canada]

Streetsboro OH April 28-30 awaiting contract at Fairfield Inn

Lancaster PA May 5-7 Guthries replacing Davidsons

**Any *Joys* you have experienced in your District?**

* Our friendship and partnership in our District leadership.
* To our knowledge, everyone who is a current presenter intends to do the “revamps.” Two key couples attended our zoom-offered meetings in early December to review the changes. They both said they were impressed with how simple and helpful the changes would be. We had extensive conversations with 4 area leaders.
* Against tremendous physical adversity Ted & Jane Guthrie (Ted has serious recent eye issues and family struggles); Greg & Colleen Davidson (Colleen has not progressed as hoped through her virulent breast cancer and faces radical surgery Feb 1st ); and Richard & Claudia Steel (Claudia is gearing up for radiation very soon) are fully committed.
* Yearly “retreats” in Michigan (November) and Ohio (March) draw 15-20 couples.
* Michigan has 3 active circles & a virtual
* Ohio has many Community events each year, publicized in the newsletter and on GLM, from Int’l Kite Flying to attending local theater together to driving many hour to see the Ark Exhibit. We are committed to holding one enrichment per year (besides the retreat), and over the years it’s included Eggerich’s Love & Respect, making a wooden cross as a couple, 2022’s Five Languages of Apology, and we plan for Sept ‘23 to have a review of the Five Love Languages. These are open to singles and dating too.
* Our District’s Area leaders and presenters are creative and committed: they got on the radio for free and offered free registration that attracted interest; they had a presenter present by Zoom link twice (once due to covid, once to save expenses); NE held a non-residential and learned a lot; OH is pursuing a non-residential.
* The next District meeting will be a simple touch base for business, with a focus on enrichment and relationships on June 24th.

**In what way would you like support?**

* At every level of LME we have to seriously consider how to support and work with this new hybrid of ME-Eastern Canada, which is encountering couples twice a year. Further details are attached.
* More information about what WWME is doing. The interfaith board used to be a valuable source of ideas and “best practices,” and we miss it.
* We are desperate to see the Sunday outline revamps to see how the event has been/can be shortened.
* We didn’t see the benefit of trying to gather presenters together on a district level – we sent a note and “bats” as encouragements, plus the invitation to join a roll out by Zoom in early December, and told everyone that if they incurred local costs to promote the writing that would be approved.

**Anything else you would like to share with the NAR Board:**

* Attached is a brief summary of “Love Nudge,” a free app using the concepts of Dr Gary Chapman’s Love Languages. The Fells discovered it, but it’s not half as “enticing” as they have found Duolingo to be. That is still the app they hold up as standard for our app.
* We know that some of this is waiting for the formation of the Community Development Team, but we’d welcome some sort of quarterly “newsletter” to go out to all encountered couples – with reminders about resources, one or two links to good videos (why do they even have to be new ones? Or ones done by Lutherans?), heads up on the upcoming Weekends.
* We are going to keep presenting couples on our rosters even after they can no longer present, if they are active and able to workshop or help lead an area. You will see that we are not counting them in the statistics.
* Without needing to get bogged down with more levels, and for those of us who can’t imagine one more regular obligation, might the Development Teams just set some times to focus on specific things in between meetings? Something to attend when we can.
* Our relationship with Marriage Encounter-Eastern Canada

Had this NAR meeting been in person, with more time, we would have encouraged the participation of Ted & Jane Guthrie so that we could all ask questions and find out more. But they understand that time is severely limited. (We realize that we had not spread the news to our District when the NAR meeting was changed so they were working off old assumptions.)

Obviously good things are happening in Ontario under their leadership efforts – two weekends a year. The only other activity is led by the Anglicans in Alberta.

Ted & Jane Guthrie started to lead the Mennonite-Brethren weekends in Ontario as an emergency replacement and then just grew into stepping up to the plate as local M&B lay presenters retired. Another LME presenting couple has been helping as well (and due to distance they weren’t getting much chance to present on LME weekends anyway).

A few years ago the decision was reached by the Canadians that the best future for Ontario would be to recreate itself, not as LME or M&B but as a legal merger, which we understand is based on the existing LME verbiage. Mennonite couples were attending in good (for modern times) numbers. The goal for formal recognition of this new ME-EC corporation is summer 2023. We personally do not understand the mechanism, all players involved, the cost, etc. We have been told that LME Canada, which has always maintained its own funding and records, has about $6000 in the bank and we wonder if this has started to subsidize the events. They use the existing registration link of the M&B group, but evidently receive no funding or support from M&B in the USA (which is mostly active in PA and has shrunk considerably from the days it was holding events in KY, IN, and OH as well). We know some past national leaders and will try to learn more about the relationship between the areas as this isn’t clear to the Guthries either.

Recently we District leaders agreed that the ME-EC Weekends be listed on the GLM.org site. However, it wouldn’t be advisable to treat them as an equal event to our usual ones, especially now that we are charging NO registration and a standard upfront charge of $275. So it will be a link only, but giving another way to publicize and “be found” by searchers. At present the Guthries explained that they charge $100 registration (Canadian) and must ask for donations of $600 (Canadian) because the cost per couple is about $450 and they must cover presenters.

We have many questions we’d like to discuss: should we consider ME-EC to be an Area in the same way we have other Areas in LME’s NAR family – doing the best they can to hold weekends and encounter as many couples as they can, using either Lutheran or M&B presenters? Would this include financial backing, in the same way as we do for any Area? Do GLM eblasts grow to include Canadian churches?