

Media / Publicity / Communications
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We are grateful for the team spirit and support the NARLME Board – as a whole, as couples, and as individuals – has shown in connecting LME via new technologies and platforms with “today’s world” online couples and for Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May God Bless You All! We have organized our report by “Joys” and “Challenges”.

JOYS

GodLovesMarriage.org

It is with great encouragement to report that – after receiving approval from the NARLME Board in January 2012 – we relaunched a fully functioning version of the GodLovesMarriage.org website on March 2, 2012 with a fresh appearance, focus, and vision to reach and register “today’s world” online couples. This effort was truly a “community” accomplishment as NARLME Board couples actively participated with content review and improvements.

Major Benefits of the Relaunched Site to Date

- Traffic analytics concerning unique visitors and Weekend registrations will be reported verbally on July 5, 2012 to be as up to date as possible at our meeting.
- Search engine optimization of the site has resulted in greater online visibility in searches for marriage ministries, retreats, and seminars – more couples from other faiths are finding our Weekends, as well as online “today’s world” couples.
- Important credibility as a valid, national ministry resource has been garnered for LME among Lutheran church staff members who have never before supported LME’s mission.
- PayPal’s online payment system provides the highest-level of efficient, secure payment for application fees via MC, Visa, Discover, and American Express, as well as PayPal and all bank debit cards. The NARLME nonprofit status account was created by the NAR Finance Couple in February 2012 and is managed by them as well. NARLME receives a discounted transaction fee of 2.1% + 30 cents per transaction as a nonprofit 501c3 organization.
- The web host and registrar for GLM.org as well as the registrar for ilme.org have been successfully moved to Leinicke Group’s trusted vendors (Web Host is Spire Consulting in St. Louis and Registrar is Network Solutions, both through Leinicke Group’s account), for faster, more efficient, and more effective web oversight.
- Continuous site maintenance is easily accomplished as Weekends are scheduled and filled, as are blog entries to positively influence site visibility in natural online searches by couples.

GodLovesMarriage.org Facebook Page

The GodLoves Marriage.org Facebook page was launched in March 2012 following final approval of the website. Posts are made several times per week using a “today’s world” voice and include Scripture and positive couple relationship/marriage observations.

GodLovesMarriage.org Church Eblasts

- One important goal the NARLME Board voted to address as part of the new publicity campaign is improvement in LME's communication, engagement, and credibility with staff and ministers of the ELCA, LCMS, and NALC churches in the United States and Canada in order to achieve greater visibility and support as a marriage resource ministry with the various Lutheran denominations as a whole.

To accomplish this goal, we worked with Cindy & Bud Amack to create the first eblast "prototype" for the Denver April 27-29, 2012 weekend. Although faced with a number of drawbacks that affected its effectiveness (including ongoing GLM site work needs, delivering the eblast in the middle of the very busy Easter season, a 1-month lodging guarantee date, and a shortened delivery schedule), database building, design, layout, writing, and delivery of the first "prototype" eblast was accomplished in order to notify churches in Colorado, Wyoming, and western Kansas 3 weeks prior to the 1-month lodging guarantee date.

Bud & Cindy Amack supplied valuable feedback from church staff in their area, which allowed us to revise and refine the next eblast prepared for the St. Louis June 8-10, 2012 weekend. We thank Bud & Cindy for their invaluable help & patience.

At this writing, we have created and delivered eblasts for Denver, CO, St. Louis, MO, Deerfield IL, Black Mountain NC, Dallas / Ft. Worth, TX, and Lindsborg, KS areas. An eblast for a Cheyenne WY Clergy Only Weekend is now in progress. Planning to produce and send eblasts to support Fall Weekends in additional areas are underway. Databases are being built electronically for each area as they occur and are stored digitally for future use.

Major Benefits of the National Eblast Program

- For the first time ever, NARLME is able to equally deliver its message electronically on a national basis to reach all LCMS, ELCA, and NALC churches with valid email addresses
- Messaging to all churches is uniform, eliminating spotty, incomplete, or inaccurate information about LME's mission and purpose
- Bulletin announcements, newsletter/website articles, video board slides, and website banners are delivered digitally in every eblast, along with an invitation to church staff to attend a Weekend, area contact couple phone numbers and emails, links to Gary Chapman's video online and to the GLM application page for the current and future Weekends, and links to "hidden" Pastor's Information pages
- Evidence of important credibility gains for LME with several 4,000+ member LCMS churches has been reported, showing immediate improvement in LME's reputation as a viable Lutheran marriage ministry resource

ACTION ITEM: We will offer eblast support to every NARLME area. Those that desire our help need only to contact us at: conniel@leinickegroup.com approximately 4 months prior to the first eblast in order to ensure enough time for database building and eblast creation with the area's specific contact area couple information. After an area's first eblast is developed with its database, a 3-month notice prior to each Weekend will be needed. Or an area can also indicate that it will want ongoing support and we will initiate contact with area leadership 3 months prior to each Weekend to verify Weekend information.

Web Graphics

As part of the 2012-2013 NARLME publicity and awareness campaign, we have developed the following:

- **Web Banners** – Two designs have been created and are offered as FREE publicity aids via Weekend eblasts to churches for ongoing use on their own websites as a direct link to GodLovesMarriage.org. This strategy is to further build LME's reputation as a bona fide marriage ministry resource with congregations and build search engine "friendliness".
- **Video Slides** – A request from Roger & Christine Williams in Dallas / Fort Worth, TX and Kari Hooper's sharing with us of a Weekend Inviting postcard design were the catalysts to inspire us to create and add this important publicity tool to area eblasts to churches for use on their video boards. We believe this is an important supplement to Bulletin Announcements.
- **ILME.org** – We created and sent Jake Rabatin, and he has already implemented on this site the following: (1) a new NARLME web banner for GLM.org, and (2) a new Donate button linked to the NARLME PayPal account.

LME Trifolds

District leadership couples contacted us during March/April/May of this year to express concerns about the email address and phone number on the LME trifolds no longer being valid. As a result, the Teuschers and Redmans approved the redesign and printing of a new trifold that supports the new vision of GodLovesMarriage.org media campaign. A total of 30,000 trifolds have been printed. These new trifolds allow area leadership couples to stamp or label each trifold with their local contact information. We are bringing 10,000 copies of the new trifold brochures to the ILME 2012 Summer Reunion for distribution.

LME Business Cards

Along with the trifold brochures, District leadership also have requested new business cards to eliminate outdated contact information. Thus we have designed and placed on the 2012 Area Resource CD a new business card that matches the new GodLovesMarriage.org graphics. By providing the business card graphics as an editable PDF, each area can personalize its contact information for printing and distribution among churches and couples in its own area.

Twitter

We established a GodLovesMarriage.org Twitter account in June 2012 while we prepared the new trifold brochure design. This strategy, although not funded or included in the January 2012 plan, allows the new trifolds to remain current within ongoing social media strategies and tactics with today's world couples. The new account name is God Loves Marriage and the account "handle" is @GodLuvvsMarriage (conventional spelling of "Loves" was impossible due to Twitter's 15-character limitation).

CHALLENGES

Personal Inviting

It is important that all NARLME encountered couples understand that the new national GLM website, eblasts, and Facebook page, and Twitter account are not meant to *replace* personal inviting, but to establish credibility for LME as an international, trustworthy marriage/family ministry resource for churches and married couples. We will appreciate Board brainstorming and discussion with us regarding strategies and tactics to successfully communicate this message to NARLME encountered couples.

Lodging Cutoff Dates

One challenge that we are facing going forward is when to pull a Weekend date off the website since the various Weekend lodging venues require different cutoff dates. Our data collected since the March 2 re-launch of GLM is that we are seeing a number of couples waiting until 2 weeks before (and in one case the day a Weekend started – luckily we got them on the Weekend anyway!) to apply/register. Without knowing each area’s arrangements with the lodging venue, we have no way of knowing without being informed by area leadership that the Weekend is full or the venue cannot accept more. We will appreciate Board brainstorming and discussion regarding strategies for appropriate communication of Weekend information.

Clergy Engagement with LME

It is our professional opinion that ongoing brainstorming and discovery is necessary by the NARLME Board regarding strategies and tactics to approach and gain the acceptance of pastors in acknowledging/supporting LME. In addition to the redesign and refocus of GodLovesMarriage.org and emailing of eblasts, strategies that we have already been made aware of include:

- Continuing education credits through Synods (Bud & Cindy Amack)
- Interaction with seminaries (Dan & Judy Teuscher)

We will appreciate continued Board brainstorming and discussion for additional strategies and focused execution tactics.

Weekend Payments

Requests for the ability to pay via check to an address included on the site have been received from several areas. We believe this payment option should be discussed by the entire NARLME Board.

Donations

We judge that a small yet significant amount of funds were donated online prior to the repurposing of the GodLovesMarriage.org website. With the new vision for that site, a new “Donate” page with button has been added on ilme.org with a link to it from the ilme.org home page. The challenge now is to make all encountered NARLME encountered couples aware that this button exists. We will appreciate Board brainstorming and discussion for strategies and tactics to improve awareness of this opportunity at ilme.org.

Trifold Brochure Distribution to Churches

It is important that the new trifold brochures “work” effectively to spread LME’s message and not languish inside boxes at the Sennes. Strategies and tactics to distribute brochures could include:

- An offer in area eblasts to deliver 100 FREE brochures to churches that request it. (These would then be delivered by area application/registration couples in order to track and make personal contact with church office staff.)
- Schedule a monthly “area blitz” mailing of 100 brochures to 1/12 of all churches in each area along with an LME cover letter supplying churches with more info about LME. This “bulky” mailer can be mailed at the lower “media rate” via USPS.
- Development of an awareness program to target and establish a relationship with seminaries throughout the NAR, which would include (1) a clergy couple in each denomination who would reach out to seminaries and establish communication with seminary leadership, (2) act as “guest speakers” in relationship appropriate seminary classes to publicize LME as an important marriage/family resource not only for seminarians’ future ministry, but also for their own marital relationship, and (3) provide brochures for seminary couples to apply for a Weekend and for the seminary’s student resource center.

We will appreciate additional brainstorming and discussion by the NARLME Board regarding strategies and tactics to make the new brochures “work” hard for LME.

Social Media

With both a Facebook page (GodLovesMarriage.org) and a Twitter account (GodLuvMarriage), NARLME encountered couples who are active on these social media platforms should make the effort to “Like” the Facebook page and “Follow” the Twitter account in order to grow awareness and influence of these two outreach efforts. One challenge here is to keep both of these accounts’ conversations/posts “today’s world” based. Our goal is to attract couples to GodLovesMarriage.org through conversations that revolve around topics of interest to the marital relationship. Once those unencountered couples feel comfortable with the supportive “voice” of GodLovesMarriage.org on these platforms, our hope is that they will make the next step to explore the website and attend a Weekend.

Blog

We will be grateful for blog post ideas from all NARLME Board members interested in offering them. We will begin creating ongoing blog posts weekly as soon as the area databases are complete and the initial round of area eblasts have been created.

Community Support

Roger & Christine Williams informed us recently that they have been told we will be building/rebuilding each area’s website. Since this level of support was not part of our estimated costs presented in January 2012 to the NARLME Board for 2012-2013, we request the Board’s support in correcting this misinformation within each District.

However, given the Board discussion during the January 2012 meeting regarding the additional need for ongoing post-Weekend Community support, we recommend that this topic be revisited – along with additional online strategies/tactics for Community support – at an appropriate future date.

Videos

It is our recommendation that the NARLME Board consider production of a series of :60 second “benefits” focused videos in the near future to use on the GodLovesMarriage.org website, in eblasts, on Facebook, in Twitter, and on a branded GodLovesMarriage.org YouTube channel. We solicit discussion of this recommendation by the full NARLME Board.