

**LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER DISTRICT REPORT**

**For July, 2017 NAR, ILME & Interfaith Meetings**

***(PLEASE SUBMIT TO RUFES NO LATER THAN JUNE 5, 2017)***

**ROSTERS:**

*See attached.*

**WEEKENDS HELD (November, 2016-May, 2017):** *(By Area within your District)*

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u># couples</u>	<u># Lutheran Individuals</u>	<u># Lutheran Clergy</u>	<u># Presenters</u> (+ Faith Expression if Not Lutheran)
<i>November 11-12, 2016</i>	<i>(Rockford/ N. IL area)South Beloit, IL</i>	<i>Garden Hotel</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2 (one male, one female, different couples)</i>	<i>4 (2 couples)</i>
<i>April 28-30</i>	<i>(St. Louis Area)Dittmer, MO</i>	<i>Sojourn Retreat Center</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2 (1 Couple)</i>	<i>4 (2 Couples)</i>	<i>6 (3 Couples)</i>
<i>April 21-23</i>	<i>(Dallas/Fort Worth) Dallas, Texas</i>	<i>Wyndham Dallas Suites Park Central</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6 (3 couples)</i>

**WEEKENDS SCHEDULED:** *(By Area within your District)*

<u>Dates</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
<i>October 13-15, 2017</i>	<i>(Central Illinois Area)Peoria, IL</i>	<i>Quality Inn and Suites</i>	
<i>November 10-12,2017</i>	<i>(Rockford/ N. IL area)South Beloit, IL</i>	<i>Garden Hotel</i>	
<i>November 3-5, 2017</i>	<i>(St. Louis Area) Dittmer, MO</i>	<i>Sojourn Retreat Center</i>	
<i>August 4-6, 2017</i>	<i>(Dallas/Fort Worth Area) Dallas, Texas</i>	<i>Wyndham Dallas Suites Park Central</i>	
<i>November 3-5, 2017</i>	<i>(Dallas/Fort Worth Area) Richardson, Texas</i>	<i>Spring Hill Retreat Center</i>	

**PRESENTING COUPLE STRENGTH:** *(By Area within your District)*

<u>Area</u>	<u># Clergy</u>	<u>#3<sup>rd</sup> Set</u>	<u>#2<sup>nd</sup> Set</u>	<u>#1<sup>st</sup> Set</u>	<u>#LOA</u>	<u>#Not CPO Encounter Ready</u>
<i>Central Illinois</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Rockford/ N. IL</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>St. Louis</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Dallas/Fort Worth</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

**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 personal, couple, Area, and District endeavors.*

**Prayer:** *Include specific prayer plans/activities/other.*

*NI appreciates the Prayer Chain by Kerns; regular prayers.*

*D/FW couples are encouraged to continue prayer for Weekend couples, for the Weekend, and for a thriving community. Prayer is uplifted at each Community event or function.*

**Personal Development:** *What kinds of things are you doing/planning/do you recommend we incorporate in order to thrive in leadership in LME and in life?*

*St. Louis suggests better inter-District communication and better training for new leaders.*

*D/FW -- Williams have attended a marriage conference including presentations by marriage counselors, therapists, etc., on all facets of marriage (blended families, infidelity, communications, etc.) including networking with others involved in marriage ministry from local churches and agencies.*

*Re-instituting work-shopping the work-shopper, annual mandatory presenter enrichment events, and Leadership enrichment programs should be developed and presented.*

*Proposed or aspiring District or NAR leaders should take the Strength Finder inventory or something similar to assess their leadership strengths and to aid in their discernment for the appropriateness of leadership in a given task. Their information should be shared with those responsible for voting for them for their discernment as well.*

**Pre-Encounter Excellence:** *Include inviting/recruiting/publicity/Pre-Encounter Contacts, etc.*

*CIA sends mailings to area churches, gives temple talks (Les and Penny), and sets up booths at pastor's district meetings; we encourage one on one invitations.*

*Rockford sends out a "save the date" note to churches in surrounding areas; we send publicity announcements to area churches and include local names to call for further information. A letter is sent to registering couples within a week of registration. A phone call is made to each registering couple a week before the weekend. People from local ME circles contact local pastors as much as possible; serious attempts are made to find prayer couples who will attend the close of the encounter (everyone had someone to greet them following the weekend in November.)*

*St. Louis had a booth at District Pastor conference (in late 2016). Gave registration fee for a couple of pastors as a drawing. Pastors gave church contact information to be included in the drawing. Attendees get a confirmation email within 24 hours of receiving their application. A letter is sent through US mail about a week before the weekend starts.*

*D/FW continues to plan events for movie nights, romantic dinners, marriage seminars (The Art of Marriage, etc.) in order to engage couples for inviting opportunities.*

**Encounter Excellence:** *What are you doing /planning to insure excellence in the Encounter Experience?*

*Rockford prays and attends to the needs of the couples during the weekend (such a room problems, diet, etc.) We provide a pre-encounter and post encounter survey at the beginning and end of a weekend.*

*Trying out new facilities and rated positives and negatives for each location. Added an on location host couple to handle organization. Made special arrangements to make sure and get a romantic setting for the Saturday night dinner.*

*Securing top notch facilities, professionalism in materials, and coordinated behind the scenes care are vital in presenting the best experience possible.*

**Post-Encounter Excellence:** *What is being done/planned to engage/support the newly encountered?*

*Rockford sends monthly e-mails from presenter team for 6 months; one of these mailings is a letter of invitation to Scripture dialogue with instruction. All couples are invited to a circle or journey group near them.*

*St. Louis presenters contacted the couples to check in, invite to weekend reunion, answer any questions about their dialogue, and promote Journey Groups and upcoming community events.*

*D/FW continues to offer post-Weekend renewal and Journey Group opportunities as well as phone and email contact post-Weekend. Most of our Weekend couples are coming from a substantial distance so much of our follow-up is telephonic or digital.*

*An active post-Weekend letter campaign by Weekend Presenters is encouraging to post-Weekend couples.*

*Opportunities to serve as Prayer Couples are offered at their sing-off encouraging them to get involved before the shine wears off. Newly Encountered are contacted to serve as Prayer Couple before the community-at-large is contacted.*

**ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS/PROJECTS/BEST PRACTICES:**

*Include things you are piloting or plan to pilot. If tried, please include observations/results.*

*CIA holds a potluck picnic—this year on June 4; about 10 couples usually come. A very active circle meets monthly with 4 or more couples.*

*In St. Louis, because of having an Indian couple on our April 2017 weekend, we are in talks to pilot a country program in India.*

*There are 2 active circles in the Rockford/Roscoe area. We did a publicity table at the Congregational Resourcing Event for ELCA churches in N. Illinois and plan to do again in March; several people signed up to receive weekend information; some took ME brochures back to their congregations. It is amazing how many did not know what ME was!*

*D/FW -- Our November Weekend will be a combined residential and non-residential Weekend at a small local retreat center.*

### **ENRICHMENTS/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:**

*St. Louis -- Epiphany Party, Romantic Weekend, Strengthening Journey groups.*

*D/FW -- Weekend renewal and Journey Groups. A Community overnight retreat is being planned for September.*

*NI – World Marriage Day Celebration with renewal of vows with communion and hand fasting. Combined motivational meeting of circles in Sept/Oct for support and motivation.*

### **CPO ACTIVITIES:**

*In what ways are you connecting with other WWME Faith Expressions?*

*Rockford contacted local Methodist ME leadership who were interested in advertising to their community (though they are not holding weekends.)*

*The Dallas Area Methodist spiral keeps us informed of their meetings and those of us that can make it attend.*

*Williams have attended the Catholic Sectional meetings and have given their presentation on the four generation groups at a couple of their leadership meetings. Interaction with the Catholic Community continues to be a source of resources, networking, and ideas.*

### **VARIETY OF MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCES:**

*If you're holding or considering anything other than the traditional Weekend, please include here.*

*St. Louis is planning to possibly hold a clergy-only weekend at the Seminary.*

*D/FW will hold our November Weekend at a small retreat center. Only 12 rooms are available but adequate space is available for presentations. This will allow us to offer rooms for those coming from a distance, while offering a non-residential opportunity for local couples.*

*This will hopefully reduce cost and make the Weekend available to some who would not otherwise consider attending.*

*As mentioned before, D/FW will offer a Community Overnight Retreat for Encountered couples. The retreat will be held at the facility our November Weekend is scheduled for as a familiarization and dry run effort to work out the kinks before the Weekend.*

### **UPDATES TO SHARE:**

#### **STRENGTHS AND HOW WE APPLIED THEM:**

*NI – We are maintaining good relationships between two circles by meeting together at times; this has brought forth renewed strength. People are taking on jobs for the weekend – but always changing as their busyness allows.*

*St. Louis -- Common Website branding. We use God Loves Marriage branding on everything we produce and handout.*

*Our vigilant and dedicated volunteers are the strength that keeps D/FW going. We try to encourage and motivate each other to make our area thrive.*

#### **WEAKNESSES AND HOW WE ADDRESSED THEM:**

*St. Louis -- Low registration so we attended the Pastor's conference and worked to update Church contact information.*

*Our greatest weakness is local inviting. We need more local couples to draw community and leaders from. We are making efforts to strengthen local inviting through relationships with local clergy, but the progress is slow and deliberate. Personal inviting is continually encouraged.*

**SUCSESSES / PROBLEMS SOLVED / OBSTACLES OVERCOME:**

*D/FW -- Continued effort to get an active Journey Group meeting regularly has finally paid off. A group of 6-8 couples meet monthly for 10/10, Dialogue, food, and fellowship.*

*NI – Successful community circles meeting monthly and bimonthly – each with about 10 to 12 couples. In order to keep expenses low with smaller weekends, we use only 2 presenting couples with 10 or fewer registered couples; this is working well and we find we don't overwhelm the attendees with leadership couples.*

**CHALLENGES WE FACE / PROBLEMS THAT NEED SOLVING:**

*CIA is struggling to recruit couples; new couples come from far distances, so it is hard to keep them in community circles.*

*NI – People complete weekend and rate it positive, but are unresponsive thereafter for the most part when we contact them. (“Been there, done that attitude?”)*

*Could placement of the financial talk be at the beginning of the talk after Sunday lunch? It is awkward where it is.*

*St. Louis -- Getting our area Churches to promote Marriage Encounter so that our registrations would increase The [www.ilme.org](http://www.ilme.org) website is outdated and hard to navigate.*

**PRAYER CONCERNS:**

*NI -- That we all “hang in there” with God’s strength because the need for the ME ministry will recycle.*

*D/ FW -- Pray for more couples on more Weekends than ever before. Pray for more workers for the vineyard, and more qualified and possibly younger leadership couples to surface.*

**HELP DESIRED:**