NORTH AMERICAN REGION

CALL TO BE FAMILY

DBA Lutheran Marriage Encounter

Dan & Charlotte Ricks

Secretary Couple

1725 W. Lake Ave.

Peoria, IL 61614

Phone (309) 645-8952

dcrLME1094@comcast.net

July 27-29, 2023

Hello NAR Board Members,

This package provides the minutes of the NAR Board Meeting that was held July 27-29, 2023 in Phoenix, Arizona.

The minutes record the proceedings of the meeting. We attempt to avoid repeating the contents of the prepared District and Staff reports, so please read the entire package for completeness.

**Please Note:** The posted reports are prepared before the meeting for presentation and discussion. Concerns, requests and proposals may be modified during the meeting, so the reports attached to the minutes may not reflect decisions of the board. Matters of consensus are recorded in the minutes.

**Next NAR Board Meeting:** The next NAR Board meeting will be virtual on October 21, 2023.

The **Distribution List** for these minutes is as follows: NAR Lay & Clergy Execs, NAR Staff, District Lay & Clergy Execs, Area Lay & Clergy Contact Couples, European Region Lay & Clergy Execs, ILME Chair Couple.

To accommodate distribution of the minutes, the contents will be organized into several sections for easier downloading and printing. The minutes are available to all presenting couples, at <https://godlovesmarriage.org/continuing-the-journey/resources/presenting-couples/>.

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SWOT Template

**Post Meeting Additions**

2023 LME SWOT Analysis Rev2

Marriage Encounter competition analysis

Marriage first marketing plan 2024

**Attending NAR Board Members:**

 Hartmans, Prestons, Fells, Pedersens, Steinkes, Coles, Rickses, Leinickes.

Thursday, July 27, 2023 7:00 PM

**Welcome and opening prayer** by Mick and Sandy Preston.

**Relationship Celebration** – Couples played a get to know others game, led by Ted and Marty Hartman.

New prayer partners were announced.

**Devotion** – The Aroma of Christ: 2 Corinthians 2:14, 15. Led by Ted and Marty Hartman, aroma helps you remember things better. This included a game of smelling small bottles and trying to guess the aroma.

**10/10 question** – What aroma do you bring to our marriage? Briefly describe. What are my feelings about my answer? Answers were shared with spouses followed by meeting with new prayer partners.

Meeting was closed. Library (social) time was held in Room 837.

Friday, July 28, 2023 8:30 AM

Leah and Jason Cole led singing. She reminded us that church is worship, and we often already know the songs. LME presenting is similar, we practice the talks, like singing, learning new songs.

**Devotion** – Signs of Promises, led by Mick and Sandy Preston, there are signs everywhere, physical signs, signs from your body, signs from God, do we see them or ignore them? We are billboards for God. We need to see and acknowledge the signs.

**10/10 question** – What are the signs and/or promises from God you are leaning on in your life right now as you continue to nurture marriages and promote God Loves Marriage? HDIFAMA? Couples were given time to write and share their answers.

**Approval of January 2023 meeting minutes**. Approved by consensus. Jean Fell mentioned that the April minutes should say that they had a retreat in Ohio, not a district meeting.

**Marketing Development Team** – Led by Jim and Jill Steinke, review of responses to the SWOT survey that was sent out pre-meeting. SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats. After reviewing the responses, the group voted on which points were the most important in each category.

**Strengths**

\*Proven program and concepts with personal examples that improve marriage

\*Established web presence

\*Virtual options for both experiences and journey groups

**Weaknesses**

\*Aging and tired volunteer pool, no new, younger couples volunteering

\*Experiences that require several days commitment and don’t “entertain” enough or aren’t interactive

\*Lack of clergy couple depth

**Opportunities**

\*Previous encountered couples focused strategy

\*Use of technology in the development and support of experiences to improve efficiency

\*Partnership with targeted church congregations, combining forces with other faith expressions and marriage ministries

\*Rekindling Engaged Encounter experiences

**Threats**

\*Busy-ness of the family unit and less dedication to the marriage relationship

\*No young, next generation volunteers, slowed volunteer recruitment with aging leadership

\*LBGTQ+, same gender marriage; potential legal or social conflicts

Review of the competition analysis.

Break

**District Reports**

Central District – Steinkes, Pedersens – Planning a retreat in Iowa, October 13-14. Holding virtual Journey Group meeting the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:00PM, Central Time. Still working on updating talks. Sent out postcards to churches and had a successful weekend in Nebraska last August.

Western District – Coles– Hartmans are working with a church to get the pastor on a weekend and to start doing experiences for church members.

Eastern District – Fells – Judy Christiansen has passed away, but Don is still willing to workshop talks. Fells will be attending events in Eastern Canada. They are hoping to hold a non-residential experience soon.

Lunch

**Marketing Development Team – additional discussion**

Marriage First Marketing Plan

Promote marriage first, then Marriage Encounter to follow

Marriage is not the norm in today’s world, we have a short time to work on this

1 – increase engagement with couples

2 – improve Marriage Enrichment

3 – promote ME key concepts

4 – promote ME experiences

How do we do this? Establish a social media calendar, tell our story, share, promote experiences, YouTube, personal reflections on our weekends, social media, add new videos to the YouTube channel, renew contact with previously encountered couples to revive interest and promotion. Update email database-churches, District and Area couples including all encountered couples.

**Staff Reports**

Finance – Redmans, not present at the meetings. Mick Preston reminded everyone to be sure to use the correct forms for weekend reports immediately following your experience.

Media – Leinickes – In addition to written report, Connie received an email from a couple, non-Lutheran, asking to use content from our website for their website. They are part of WWME. The board gave her permission to share. Leinickes still need someone from each area to confirm current email lists, both for couples and for churches.

Executive – See written report. Marty shared a message from Finland leadership.

Break

**Development Team Reports**

Experience Development Team – Prestons – Asked for consensus that all experiences presented beginning in January of 2024 will be done with the new outlines. Workbooks will hopefully be updated to new outlines by then and the PowerPoint presentation will also be updated. Consensus given.

Community Development Team – Hartmans - Team is developing a survey about what is not working.

Virtual Development Team – Pedersens – Asking themselves, ‘Why did God not let this die?’, see the surveys in their report. Most would like to get back to in-person experiences, but see the need for virtual ones also. There are fewer areas active to help host in-person events.

Marketing Development Team – Steinkes – The app is still in development. Love Talks is the registered name. It is set up for Android but they are still working on Apple application. This will be a tool to help promote Marriage Encounter for new couples, but also for use by already encountered couples. The app is secure. Ryan and Andy are doing the development.

Workbook updates have been on the back burner, but the team will work harder to be ready by January now that a date has been set to use the new outlines. The team is Leinickes, Coles, and Steinkes. Graphics will match the PowerPoint and blank dialogue pages will be added to eliminate the need for the spiral notebooks.

Break

Registration Fee for 2024 –

Current rates are $275 for in-person experiences and $75 for virtual experiences. There was some discussion about the cost changing who signs up. We still ask for donations at the end of the weekend, which is mentioned on the website when they register. New wording was suggested for the website stating: This is an investment in your marriage, because others have invested before you, we can hold this experience. Consensus was given to keep the rates the same and update the wording on the website. They also hope to include the average real cost for the country, amount to be determined.

Next NAR Board meeting will be virtual on October 21, 2023

Next in-person NAR Board meeting will be January 18-20, 2024, In Phoenix, Arizona.

Presentation – Coles – What do people typically pray for? Family or friends, their own problems, good things, their own sin, people in disasters, God’s greatness, future prosperity, government leaders.

Have you ever prayed for? People who mistreat you, your enemies, winning the lottery, success in something that you put almost no effort in, that no one will find out a bad thing you had done, for God to avenge someone who hurt you or a loved one. The group was asked to pray The Lord’s Prayer out loud 3 times, each starting at different times.

Prayer Couple Quadralogue Question – Recall a time when you truly felt the prayers of another and the presence of God. Briefly reflect on the situation and then focus on thoroughly describing your feelings during that moment. OR Reflect on a time when you discovered that one of your prayers was answered. Describe your feelings in loving detail.

After writing, meet with your prayer couple to share your answers.

Library time

Saturday, July 29, 2023 8:30 AM

Opening song led by Leah Cole

Ecumenical Discussion – Led by Ted Hartman – We are currently Lutheran Marriage Encounter, licensed under the Roman Catholic Church, as part of WWME, World Wide Marriage Encounter. There have been other faiths with groups over the years, but most have faded. Catholic and Lutheran are the largest faiths still active in Marriage Encounter. The Interfaith Board is talking about making changes. Current guidelines do not allow clergy from a different faith to present on a weekend. How critical is the faith of the presenters to the results of the weekend for the couples attending? Should we offer to combine with other faiths to make the group stronger?

There was a lot of discussion about whether or not the specific faith should stop couples from being allowed to present on weekends. No decisions were made, but further discussion will be held at future meetings.

Add Venmo as another method of online payment. Leinickes to connect with Redmans to get this done.

Other Business – open discussion. Remember to focus on the threats to Marriage Encounter. Get more younger couples involved in LME. Marriage First! For same sex marriage questions, defer to Ted Hartman, Executive Clergy.

Break to check out of hotel rooms

Sending service with communion – led by Ted Hartman

10/10 question to write later – What aroma do we want people to experience from our marriage? How do I feel about my answer?

Closing and Lunch

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan and Charlotte Ricks, NAR Board Secretary Couple