

The Voice of Renewal

NEWSLETTER OF LUTHERAN LAY RENEWAL OF AMERICA

*Renewing faith and promoting spiritual growth in individuals and congregations
with renewal weekends, retreats, workshops, and conferences*

Celebrating 52 Years!

January, A.D. 2025

RETREATS IN DUBAI, U.A.E.

In October our Executive Director had a Zoom meeting with three Ethiopian pastors, one in the U.S. and two in Dubai. There are a lot of Ethiopian Christians living and working in Dubai, and many churches and pastors there to minister to them. As a result of the October meeting, the two pastors in Dubai, Revs. Sami Gashaw and Akia Teshome, have now led our 7 Lessons for Living the Spiritual Life retreat and found them very beneficial.

"Hello my brother Bill, may God's grace be upon you. I am Pastor Sami from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. In two sessions, I taught the seven points that help lead a spiritual life to the church participants. In my efforts to receive comments about the teaching, people's answers have made us look inward, and they have testified that we have learned how to live in love in our relationships with others and to obey God's calling and walk in the power of God. Finally, our brother, I thank the Lord for the grace in you and for teaching the lesson. May God bless you and the next episodes."



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Pastor Sami Gashaw leads the 7 Lessons for Living a Spiritual Life retreat in Dubai



Retreat at Pastor Akia Tesheo's church

LUTHERAN LAY RENEWAL RETURNS TO UGANDA

Our Executive Director will be leaving for Uganda on January 13 to lead retreats and conferences, as well as preach and visit with many church leaders. Details are listed in our Scheduled Events section and more events in Uganda in February are still in the planning stage.

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

We now have a new website, which can be viewed at www.LLRA.org. All of our YouTube videos are now on the site, as well as on our YouTube channel. In addition, the site has downloadable flyers on all of the ministry options we offer, as well as links to our newsletters. Many thanks to Maddie Fair for the great work she did in creating the new site!

LUTHERAN LAY RENEWAL ON THE RADIO!

In October we recorded two 25-minute radio interviews for the Biz Burgh program on WORD-FM 101.5 in Pittsburgh. Bill Oehlschlager and Fred Magezi recorded the first program and LLRA board members Lou McKibben and Jerry Kuhn recorded the second. The purpose of these programs is to promote awareness of our ministry in Africa. For those who are interested, but live outside of the Pittsburgh area, and others who have not heard the programs, they still can be heard by clicking on the following links:

<https://omny.fm/shows/word-podcasts/biz-burgh-lutheran-lay-renewal-1-1>

<https://omny.fm/shows/word-podcasts/biz-burgh-lutheran-lay-renewal-2-1>

THOUGHTS ON THE EPIPHANY

"The conduct of the wise men is a striking example of faith. They believed in Christ when they had never seen Him - but that was not all. They believed in Him when the Scribes and Pharisees were unbelieving - but that again was not all. They believed in Him when they saw Him a little infant on Mary's knee, and worshiped Him as a king. This was the crowning point of their faith. They saw no miracles to convince them. They heard no teaching to persuade them. They saw no signs of divinity and greatness to overawe them. They saw nothing but a newborn infant, helpless and weak, and needing a mother's care like any one of ourselves. And yet when they saw that infant, they believed that they saw the divine Savior of the world. 'They fell down and worshiped Him.'" - John R. W. Stott

In a conversation with Rev. Philip Bottomley of CMJ-USA this week, he suggested that the Magi perhaps were Jewish. If you remember Jewish history, you will remember that after 70 years in captivity in Babylon in the 6th century B.C., many Jewish people returned to their native land, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and then rebuilt the temple; however, many also chose to remain in Babylon. Perhaps it was some of their descendants, Philip suggested, who were studying the scriptures, as well as looking for signs in the heavens, who traveled to Jerusalem seeking the one they believed had been born King of the Jews. While we can't know with any certainty, this makes sense to me, after all, why would gentiles travel perhaps hundreds of miles to visit a baby they believed had been born king of a foreign country and not just bring gifts but also worship that baby? He would have been much more important to Jews who were awaiting the birth of their promised Messiah – Bill Oehlschlager

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

Does your congregation need a spiritual boost? Are your people in need of deeper spirituality and understanding? Maybe it's time to schedule one of our retreats, a workshop or renewal weekend. Call our office or check our website for details and informational flyers!

SCHEDULED EVENTS

January 16-17	Clergy/Spouse Retreat Diocese of Northwest Ankole Ibanda, Uganda The Rt. Rev. Amos Magezi, Bishop
January 18	Renewal Conference Trinity Lutheran Church Kyahenda, Buhweju District John Kyabahwa, Evangelist
January 20-22	Renewal Conference Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Ibanda, Uganda Rev. Humphrey Asiimwe, Pastor
January 27-29	Renewal Conference Rusolero Lutheran Church Rev. Raymond Kaija, Dean

OUR PARTNERS IN AFRICA NEED OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT!

The financial needs of our partners in Africa are great, as Uganda and Rwanda are two of the 25 poorest countries in the world. Below is a wish list of current financial needs. Would you or your congregation be willing to help?

Lutheran Church of Uganda

\$4,500 will pay for all the annual expenses at Naigobya Health Clinic on the grounds of Naigobya Lutheran Church and School. This clinic serves the people of five remote villages in Eastern Uganda.

\$355 will pay the salaries of 6 teachers & the principal at a primary school for 1 month. Due to poverty in these areas, we are providing support as we are able for both Naigobya and Kyabazaala Lutheran Nursery and Primary Schools.

Kyahenda Lutheran Church

Bricks made by the congregation are ready to be fired so that construction can be started to build a large church for this congregation. \$10,000 is needed for the first phase of construction.

Josiah Youth and Child Care Center – Ibanda, Uganda

Josiah Youth and Child Care Africa is dedicated to nurturing the potential of youth by providing a diverse range of educational, skill-building, and mentorship programs. Guided by our core values, we aim to foster personal growth, inspire leadership, and create a supportive environment where each individual can thrive.

Diocese of Northwest Ankole, (Anglican) Church of Uganda

"We are looking for partners to work with us to address the matters of education, health, food security, household income, clean water, sanitation, hygiene and afforestation. We, therefore, request a partnership in any of these matters, especially assisting the youth and children to attain education so that they might be released from poverty and ignorance." – The Rt. Rev. Amos Magezi, Bishop

Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda

Funds are needed to build a church building for the Lutheran congregation in Ntoma, which currently is using a rental house. "Please, we need to build our own church building in Ntoma. Your prayers for the work of God in Rwanda will continue to be a blessing. Adult members are 120, and the total believers including youth and children are over 300." - Pastor Jean Claude Maniragaba, President, Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda

Triangular Communities – Iganga, Uganda

Vision: To see all children and girls enter adulthood with holistic skills and abilities necessary to contribute effectively to the development of Uganda.

One hundred percent of any donations to Lutheran Lay Renewal will go to the need designated by the donor or, if you prefer to work directly with a church or ministry in Africa, please contact our office and we will put you in touch with church leaders there.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Healing for Elaine Schomaker, Julie, Dan and Kathie Klueg
- For the victims of the wildfires in California
- For the Lord's blessings on our ministry in the U.S., Uganda, Rwanda and the United Arab Emirates and for the financial resources that are needed for this ministry to continue to grow and flourish

Lutheran Lay Renewal of America is eligible to receive Choice Dollars Grant Funds from the Thrivent Financial Choice Dollars program. We are grateful to Thrivent Financial, and those individuals who designate their Choice Dollars to us, for their support of LLRA and its ministry!

Lutheran Lay Renewal of America is a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization (tax ID#35-2442848) and depends on contributions from churches, and individuals, that have benefited from our ministry to help us continue to bring this ministry to more and more congregations all across America - and also in Uganda and Rwanda!

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