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Lutheran — yes, Lutheran — revival set to fire up flock

by Charlotte Ferrell Smith

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The Rev. Richard Mahan has been spreading word of Fire on the Mountain, a revival to be held at St. Timothy Lutheran Church with nationally known speakers, praise band music, and food.

Fire on the Mountain is just what the name implies, says the Rev. Richard Mahan.

"This is for Christians to get fired up and claim that first ever love you had for God," he said of the upcoming revival scheduled by his church, St. Timothy Lutheran.

A revival in a Lutheran church?

Mahan acknowledges it may not be a common occurrence. But it is just what people need to boost spirituality and find a sense of renewal.

A great deal of planning has gone into the event that Mahan hopes will attract hundreds from various Christian denominations.

During the last decade, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has lost 200,000 members. While many mainline churches have experienced a decline, non-denominational congregations have grown. In 2001, Mahan became part of a 30-member national task force to study evangelism.

"We put together a strategy and presented it to the national convention in 2003," he said of a plan that included prayer, discipleship and revivals.

"I worked on revivals on that part of the task force," he said. "Old-fashioned revival gatherings are to be implemented in 2007. I'm one of 11 revivalists in the ELCA."

To launch the plan, revivals began in 2004 with a total of eight being held to date. The one at St. Timothy will be the first in the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, an area that includes 65 ELCA churches.

Fire on the Mountain will draw religious leaders and revivalist pastors from throughout the country along with nationally-recognized speakers.

Fire on the Mountain at St. Timothy Lutheran Church is set for Thursday through Sunday with food, music, speakers, and prayer stations where people may ask for confidential prayer to meet their personal needs.

Dinner will be served 5:30 p.m. Thursday and the service begins 7 p.m. with the Rev. Mary C. Frances, pastor of Joyful Spirit Lutheran Church in Bolingbrook, Ill. She specializes in hospital ministry, evangelism and discipleship.

Dinner is served 5:30 p.m. Friday and the revival service begins 7 p.m. with the Rev. Lamont Wells, pastor of the Lutheran Church of Atonement in Atlanta, Ga. He is a pastoral leader, team builder and community organizer.

A prayer breakfast will be served 8 a.m. Saturday. Dinner will be served 5:30 p.m. and the revival begins 7 p.m. with the Rev. Ernie Hinojosa, pastor of Camino Real Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas. He is a church planter, trainer, and speaker on evangelism.

Worship service on Sunday is 10:30 a.m. when speakers will be Wells and Mahan.

Mahan said organizers hesitated to call the event a revival but did so because that is exactly what it is and what is needed to boost the spirit and soothe the soul.

"A revival is to internally equip us for evangelism which is external," Mahan said. "It's for spiritual renewal. People have had a negative connotation of revival but it is to refresh, renew and equip and get fired up about faith in Jesus Christ.

"Generally, we are liturgical," he said. "This won't be real formal. It will be more attendance friendly. Anybody can feel at home. They will really preach the gospel. People are hungry for renewal. People have to have something solid that won't change. That's what is neat about the gospel. It never changes."