

Lutheran Lay Fellowship of Metropolitan Washington DC



Thursday, March 1, 2012 – 12:00 noon

Saint Luke Lutheran Church
9100 Colesville Road at Dale Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Bob “Sarge” Sargent opened the meeting of the Lutheran Lay Fellowship (LLF) by asking for those who were celebrating birthdays during the month of March. Best wishes to Barbara Solt and Ellie Wegener who celebrate birthdays on March 16th and 20th, respectively. There was no one present celebrating March anniversaries. Jana Broughton was introduced as the new Executive Director at Fellowship Square, having recently moved to the Washington DC area from north of Detroit. Welcome Jana to our gathering! LLF also asked for Jana to plan a presentation for LLF sometime in the next few months.

Devotions were led by the guest speaker of the day, Dr. Barbara E. Solt, who led a prayer on the subject of baptism from the new cranberry Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship, Thanksgiving at the Font service, page 70.

Announcements following lunch, Sarge provided the following updates:

1. There will be a Round Table discussion/brain storming session about the growth of LLF into the future. Session will be held prior to the next LLF on Thursday, April 5th beginning at 10:45 am.
2. There are two election possibilities coming up for the LLF. The LLF elects 25 corporate members each year for the Board of the Fellowship Square Foundation. These positions will attend the annual meeting of the foundation on April 21, 2012. There are several 3-year positions that need to be filled for the Class of 2015. If anyone is interested in being a corporate member, please let Pastor Larry Schmidt know.
3. We will be electing LLF officers at the June LLF meeting. We need a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Please let Bonnie Priebe know if you are interested.
4. Luncheon attendees need to let LLF know if they plan to attend each meeting. LLF publishes a contact name and telephone number in each month’s meeting announcement so you can let that person know if you will be attending the monthly meeting.

Carol Sowenski, from Gifts of Hope, announced that the Metro DC Lutheran Synod has a partner synod of Lutheran Churches in El Salvador. The goal is to raise \$12,000 in 2012 for the Pastoral Endowment Fund run by the ELCA. Lutherans can give directly to this fund through the Gifts of Hope flyer from their website, www.giftsofhopemetrodc.org

Ellie Wegener announced to check with Linda Everett if you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2012. The March 2012 meeting announcement will be the last one mailed out to members who have not yet renewed their memberships for 2012.

Also, Ellie mentioned that the free memoir group is continuing to meet at Georgetown Lutheran Church and would welcome newcomers (see attached flyer).

Finally, Ellie announced that the Unemployment Support Group continues to meet at The First Trinity Lutheran Church at Judiciary Square in Washington DC (see attached flyer).

Sarge wrapped up this part of the program by announcing that Reverend David Percy, US Navy, Retired, will be the speaker at the April 5th LLF meeting on the subject "Understanding the Incarnation in Various Ministries".

David Berg gave the following introduction/biography of Dr. Barbara E. Solt, our guest speaker for the day:

BARBARA E. SOLT, PhD, LICSW, ACSW

"The Holy Land, Then and Now"

Barbara Solt completed her doctoral study in 2002 at the Catholic University of America National Catholic School of Social Service after 31 years of practice in developing and managing community based mental health programs for the seriously mentally ill. For nine years she directed programs for Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area. She has also worked in volunteer management for Lehigh University and Aid Association for Lutherans (now Thrivent). She worked for the Division of Mission in North America in urban ministry strategy including conducting a national consultation on singles ministry. Her MSSW is from the Columbia University School of Social Work, and her BA is from Muhlenberg College. Since 2000 she has worked part-time for The Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research and consulted for the government and private sector. Her dissertation title is *In Their Own Words: A Qualitative Study of Resilience in Adult Former Hostages*.

Barbara has lived and worked in PA, NY, VA, CA and the Metro, DC area, where she is a member of Augustana Lutheran Church. In 2000 The Luther Institute designated her a "lifetime board member". She has traveled to 15 countries and visited all US states except North and South Dakota. She loves to sing.

Barbara then began her photo show presentation:

Barbara took her trip to Israel, Palestine and Egypt in June, 2011. She went with 25 alumni and friends of Wartburg College in Waverly, IA. The tour was led by religion professor Chip Bouzard, who has led student study groups on archeological digs over the past 20 years. His experiences and those of Wartburg Professor Emeritus Fred Strickert and his wife, Gloria, who serve at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, provided a unique bridge between the Holy Land of Jesus' time and today.

Barbara's background in social work makes it important for her to understand the context of her trip; how going to the Holy Land brings the reality of the Bible to life.

The Holy Land is a land of contrasts – there's a 7,800 foot difference between the mountains of the Golan Heights in the far north to going 1,400 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea. The Holy Land is very hilly. In the north, there is plenty of water. In the south, the land, which includes the Sinai Desert, is much drier and sandier. Land issues often are about water rights, and this is particularly the case in the Holy Land.

Highlights of her trip included worshipping in Jerusalem on Pentecost Sunday. Also, she heard a Palestinian Christian perspective from the Palestinian Christian guide for her tour group and meeting with the Palestinian pastor and members of the Christmas Lutheran church in Bethlehem.

Barbara encouraged people to learn more via several web addresses, including the ELCA site:

- <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx> - Strickert Blog, info on ELCA Ministries.
- www.diyar.ps - Diyar is the plural of Dar, which means "home" in Arabic. Founded in 1995 it's a Lutheran-based, ecumenical organization serving the whole Palestinian community.

See <http://besholylandtour2011.shutterfly.com/> for her complete photo show with captions.

Her talk was organized around several themes, rather than showing the order in which the tour was conducted. Her talk began by focusing on the importance of water both to our theology as well as to its political importance to the region. In the North, Tel Dan is the Jordan Headwaters. The group moved south to the Jordan River baptism site. At the Sea of Galilee there were lots of mountains in the background. This was likely the area where Jesus went into the mountains for 40 days of temptation. Also, by the Sea of Galilee was where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. The sand at this site next to the Sea is not what we are used to, but actually consists of really tiny seashells.

"I lift my eyes to the hills" focused on the mountains in the region, including the northern town of Nazareth, which is not a small town anymore, but a very metropolitan area. Other important mountains included the site of Masaada. After the fall of the Jerusalem Temple after Jesus' death and resurrection, the Israelites took the Torah and hid on a mountainside where they formed a community dedicated to protecting the Old Temple Torah from the Romans. The Romans attacked them and eventually killed them all. The Masaada community fought to the death. Today there's a cable car that takes you to the top of the mountain where the Masaada community lived, so that one does not need to climb the very high, sheer mountainside

The group then went to the mountains which held the Caves of Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in earthen jars. Every book of the Bible except Esther was found at this location. Amazing!

From there, the Barbara showed photos of the shifting sands of the Sinai Desert, including one of a Bedouin Village, where people still live in tents, consisting of a few sticks in the ground covered by a tarp. Barbara said her photos could not do justice to the large expanse of desert, but it helped her to understand the hardship of the Israelites' forty years of wandering after being led from Egypt. Mountains surrounding the desert include large pillars of sand and salt, formations four to five stories high, referred to as "Lot's Wife".

The next theme of the talk was "Built on a Rock – the Rocks of Significance" The tour group went to:

- a.) St. Peter's Church, the location where Jesus said to Peter, "...on this rock I will build my church".
- b.) The Anointing Rock – found at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This rock is moist all of the time due to the dampness in the church. Many people were putting their Bibles or hands and foreheads on the rock and praying. It is also believed this is the rock where Jesus' body was laid before Jesus was buried.
- c.) Garden of Gethsemane Rock – the rock where Jesus prayed before he was arrested.
- d.) Dome of the Rock – the large mosque located in the middle of Jerusalem, it is the second most holy place to Muslims (first is Mecca), and is the place from which Muslims believe that Mohammed ascended to heaven.

The theme "Layers and Layers of Tradition" showed efforts at unearthing the past, which is an ongoing initiative in the Holy Land, as things were historically built on top of other things The so-called Jesus Boat was a recent find in the Sea of Galilee. It was found in the mud of the Sea of Galilee by archeologists. It was encased in foam and brought out of the water and mud. It is now stored in a temperature and humidity-controlled room. This boat has been carbon dated to the 1st century CE.

In Capernaum, an ancient community, is an archeological dig. The "Synagogue of Jesus" or "White Synagogue" can be found in the ruins here. This area is likely where Jesus spent time calling the disciples. Another site here is Peter's Mother in Law's House, and built over it is a modern Orthodox Church.

Bet Saida, in the Golan Heights area are yet another ancient community ruins, likely at the beginning of the road to Jerusalem, which was probably the road Jesus took on his way to Jerusalem. Just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem are steps that have been designated "Jesus Footsteps", likely those he took to enter the city of Jerusalem, as they are from the direction from the area to the North where he lived. Also just outside Jerusalem is Lazarus' tomb, hewn out in a cave.

"X Marks the spot" – here we visited Hebron, currently a political hotspot in Israel, where a mosque and synagogue share the same building, a former Herodian palace. . In the Hebron cave beneath this building is the area where it is believed that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca were buried. Another "this is where it happened site" was the Bethlehem Church of the Nativity,

which Barbara said was not very well kept. She noted recent news of different religious groups quarreling over who should be cleaning it. In an area that looks like a fire place is likely the place where Jesus was born. A metal star surrounding a hole above a cave marks “the spot.” It is believed that Jesus was born in a cave, which served as both stables as well as living places for people at that time. Just outside Bethlehem are the Shepherd Hills, where the angels sang to the shepherds. Sheep can still be found there grazing.

The Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem is still a grove of olive trees. These trees have been dated to the 1st century CE. Around that time Herod decreed all trees were to be cut down after Jesus was crucified. They were replanted and have been dated as being 2000 years old. The Garden is next to the Kedron Valley, from which one can look across to the Dome of the Rock. There are some who think the final judgment will be here. Some also believe that St. James and other disciples were buried here. Inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, inside the Old City of Jerusalem walls, there’s a hole entrance to the tomb where inside the church where it is believed Jesus’ body was buried.

But outside the city walls is a hill with caves that make it look like a skull, Golgotha, and there is a nearby Garden Tomb which some believe is where Jesus was actually buried. Barbara noted that practically every site has its own historic controversy.

The group also visited today’s churches in the Holy Land, such as Bethlehem Lutheran Christmas Church and other modern sites like Augusta Victoria Hospital which is run by the Lutheran World Federation as a ministry to Palestinians. This hospital is the only place for certain types of treatments in the Palestinian territories. The group also worshipped in Jerusalem on Pentecost at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Chapel.

Barbara has concerns about today’s Israeli settlements, she and many others, including the United Nations, view as an invasion or encroachment on Palestinian territory. She saw many Israeli settlements in areas designated as Palestinian. This is a prime issue in the current Israel-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Her talk concluded with pictures of two walls which symbolize the conflicts between Israeli’s and Palestinians in this land. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, part of the old city wall which symbolizes for Jews their separation from what they believe to be rightfully theirs, ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple. Today prayer petitions are slipped into cracks between the stones of the wall. Another photo showed a portion of a wall built recently by Israelis as a “security” wall to keep Palestinians out of Israeli territory, including Jerusalem, which is currently divided among four religious groups. This wall resembles the Berlin Wall and certainly is not high enough to prevent mortar shells from going over it. But it does mean that residents of Bethlehem, which is only a 5-10 minute drive away and is in Palestinian territory, must go through lengthy check-points to get into work or to visit relatives in Jerusalem. This wall, which separates the two peoples, concerned her and others on the tour.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah “Dee” Lambert

LLF meeting March 1, 2012

The Metro DC Synod, with the approval of the Synod Council, is in a 2012 campaign to raise \$12,000 for the El Salvadoran Pastoral Endowment Fund, managed by the ELCA. The Sinodo Luterano Salvadoreno (SLS) is doing amazing work in bringing hope and healing to the Salvadoran people, despite the fact that dedicated pastors receive almost no salary for their ministry. Bishop Medardo E. Gomez in El Salvador is challenging all 20,000 SLS members to contribute \$1/person to a pastoral endowment fund. Our Global Mission Committee encourages congregations and individuals in our synod to join in the effort.

"What a wonderful opportunity this is for us to follow Christ's Great Commission: 'Go make disciples... baptizing them... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you!'" says Marion McInturff, Global Missions Committee, of the announcement of the campaign. "The campaign starts now! Please help us make \$12,000 in 2012 a reality!" Payment can be made through the Gifts of Hope web site (www.giftsofhopemetrod.org) or directly to our synod with notation.

MEMOIR WRITING



Group forming:

October 20 at 7:00p.m.

**Georgetown Lutheran
Church**

**1556 Wisconsin
Avenue N.W.**

MEMOIR WRITING GROUP

What is your story? A group of people is forming who want to work on their memoirs. Whether you wish to write essays, short stories, or a book about the incidents of your life, you are welcome. This group will be led by Ellie Wegener, journalist and author, to guide writers along the way. The first gathering to meet and organize will be October 20, 2011 at 7:00pm in the fellowship hall. Everyone is welcome. All you need is the desire to write. Bring your laptop or a tablet and pen.

Questions: Call Ellie Wegener at: 703-790-1469
Call Kay Swift at: 202-337-9070

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First Trinity Lutheran Church
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At front of church, door on left, ring bell on left.
Come up two flights to library to join group.

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