

Lutheran Lay Fellowship of Metropolitan Washington DC



LUNCHEON MEETING Thursday, October 4, 2012 – 12:00 noon

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

Opening Announcements

Bob Sargeant opened the meeting shortly after noon. Birthday celebrations included John Priebe, 10/11, and David Berg, 10/25. There were no anniversaries to celebrate this month.

Members were reminded of the Reformation service which will be at the National Cathedral again this year. LLF members are invited to usher.

Faye Coddling called attention to flyers regarding the emergency kit for residents of Fellowship Square. She encouraged people to put together the kit or provide funds for them.

Carolyn Sowinski announced that LLF is also included in the Gifts of Hope catalogue, which was also provided at each table. The catalogue is available online at <http://www.giftsofhopemetrod.org>

Devotions

LLF Chaplain Pr. Larry Schmidt led devotions from Genesis: The Lord said, It is not Good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper as his partner. Pr. Schmidt noted that this Creation story is complicated when you don't have a good partner. This is difficult when preaching funeral services then marriages doesn't work so well, or the deceased partner was known to be not ideal. But when partnerships work well, we can give thanks, rather than grieve for the alternative. He linked partnerships to Thrivent, where we come together to thrive financially and socially in partnership.

Introduction of Speaker

David Berg introduced Mr. Greg C. Roemer, Financial Consultant, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans who spoke on "The only not-for-profit Fortune 500 Company." Greg has been with Thrivent Financial for 15 years. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is a faith-based, not-for-profit financial services organization with approximately 2.6 million members. As the nation's largest fraternal benefit society, it helps members be wise with money and live generously. Greg graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from SUNY Buffalo in Buffalo, NY. As a financial consultant, he has completed advanced education and licensing requirements in order to provide comprehensive, customized financial guidance to his clients. Greg is married with two sons and is a member of Augustana Lutheran Church in Washington, DC. In his spare time he enjoys biking, camping, walking, computers, hiking, photography, politics and traveling.

Presentation –The only not-for-profit Fortune 500 Company

Greg distributed packets about Thrivent, the materials of which he used throughout his talk. Since there have been quite a few changes to Thrivent he spoke about these changes.

Greg began by referring to Scripture regarding the different gifts of people. He also recalled Luther's advice to Sin Boldly, having been cautioned by his pastor-father that we are not called to sin, but to know that whatever we strive to do, we should do it boldly. He recalled that growing up Lutheran, he was cautioned to not do anything to call attention to oneself, to be humble. He noted the many Lutheran services and organizations that operate "under the radar." Greg says it does not serve us or God well to remain quiet about some of the good things we do.

His role at Thrivent grew out of a prayer experience. Noting that many present are familiar with Thrivent, many even being members. (A show of hands indicated that almost all present are members). What does it mean to be member-owned? The profits are returned to the memberships. Thrivent has never missed a dividend, even during the greatest financial crises. Thrivent has \$3 set aside for every \$1 of obligations. Thrivent exists to help people get to their goals in life. Greg recalled how his life changed with the advent of his first child. In his work he helps people get in touch with their social network as well as their financial goals.

Secondly, Thrivent helps people prepare for when things go wrong in their lives, e.g. deaths, disasters, disabilities. Thrivent insurance serves this purpose. Another service is financial planning – for children's education, retirement, buy their first home. The fourth area is to help people be as tax efficient as possible. Thrivent does not give tax advice, however. Retirees today are concerned with maintaining funds in a financial environment of low interest rates. Fifth, as a fraternal organizations, Thrivent helps people to volunteer or minister to others. \$175 million was given out in fraternal funds last year. Finally, legacy planning helps members look beyond securing their family

needs. Planning can help people see that they might be more generous than they may think.

AAL and Lutheran Brotherhood merged to become Thrivent in 2002. Thrivent is the #1 contributor to Habitat for Humanity. In addition to building homes for the homeless in our country, Greg also described a house-building mission trip to El Salvador in 2008. During the financial crash of that year, Thrivent's CEO spoke out on Thrivent's financial stability. Thrivent responded to questions from rating companies to discontinue providing long-term care insurance, since it was a financial negative for the organization as a whole. Recently, the market has changed, and this product will once again be offered, (in some areas).

The future holds a number of changes. The Habitat relationship will continue. Another program is Thrivent Choice wherein members get to make decisions about where some of the fraternal funds get directed. The Chapter system needs new blood to keep their activities vital all the time. Thrivent provides volunteer resources and funds for volunteer projects.

Greg related the parable of the Talents in describing Thrivent as like the third person who invests and brings a good return. One of the packet documents How Thrivent Financial can help your Community? includes info on many educational and support or service resources that Thrivent provides to congregations. Thrivent wants to grow. It is hiring. He asked us to fill out a short form indicating who we are and what we might want to learn more about.

He noted that Lutheran church membership is shrinking, and splintering. Thrivent can't survive without growing. He invited questions.

Carolyn Sowinski commented that Thrivent supports Gifts of Hope, by providing funds to print the catalogue, for which she expressed appreciation.

Dan Bella commented on a recent Thrivent magazine which discussed the possibility of expanding membership beyond the Lutheran community, to a broader community with similar values and interests. Another question addressed the unique federal tax exempt status. Greg responded that he cannot foretell the future, but he noted that every meeting of Thrivent he attends begins with prayer. The value is on "how do we preserve who and what we are." The Lutheran demographic is changing. Lutherans and their organizations were fed by streams of immigrants in the beginning. The tax status of our organization is different from the taxability related to our financial products. Greg concluded that it's important to tell the story of what we've built so that we can encourage others to value it and to make it grow.

There are hundreds of fraternal organizations, but almost all are much smaller than Thrivent.

Another question related to use of Thrivent funds for interfaith groups or non-church not-for-profits.

Another question asked if Thrivent is international? No, with the exception in Canada where there is a history of US-Lutheran church bodies. Thrivent is pan-Lutheran. David Berg talked about a parallel organizational change to the Board of Pension which now services more than Lutherans.

Thrivent has a bank, which can serve as your trustee. There are seven Thrivent chapters in this area. Greg is the only financial advisor within the beltway. There are some dozen in the greater Metro DC area.

The meeting ended with prayer offered by Pr. Schmidt at 2:05 p.m..

Notes by Barbara E. Solt, PhD, LICSW



Fellowship Square
Foundation, Inc.
50 Years of Caring 1960-2010

Emergency Supply Kits for Residents

First Aid Kit
Duct tape
Plastic Sheeting or Clear Shower Curtain
Rain Poncho
Can Opener (*manual*)
Glow Sticks - 12
Hand Sanitizer
Protein Enriched Foods
Disinfectant Wipes
4-5 Large Garbage Bags
Paper Towel Roll
Flashlight/Batteries
Clear Plastic Container (*that will easily fit under a bed*)

*Air Tight Sealed Dried Fruit/Nuts
*Canned Meat/Fish
*Cans/Jars Fruit
*Radio/Batteries

*We will be purchasing these at bulk grocery stores or other supply houses and would appreciate cash (or check) donations for these items.

You may want to put together a few kits or you may just want to collect some of the items we need and we will combine them with others to assemble the kits. Or you may want to send a check and have our volunteers assemble the kits.

If you would like to create kits to donate we will be collecting them through December 4, 2012 and will distribute them at the holidays to residents at each location.

We will assist in making arrangements to pick up donations if needed. We need approximately 700 kits if we give one to each household. For more information please contact the central office at 571-471-5370.

Thank you making a difference in the life of a low income elderly or disabled person.

Fellowship Square. 250 Exchange Place. Suite G. Herndon VA 20170