

Lutheran Lay Fellowship of Metropolitan Washington DC



LUNCHEON MEETING Thursday, April 2, 2015 – 12:00 noon

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

Opening Announcements

President Bob Sargeant opened the meeting at 12:10, noting that LLF follows Montgomery County policy re: weather, so the March meeting was cancelled. A special welcome was given to some who have been here in the past. First time attendees included Larry Long from Lord of Life, Fairfax, Sook Funn MacDougal from the Safe Haven Campaign, Louise Dickson, volunteer coordinator for Safe Haven, and Gail Hambleton, Lord of Life, Fairfax and Speaker for the day, Florence Heacock of Christ Lutheran, Bethesda, and John and Joyce Lang, guests of the Priebe. The Langs are members of Progressive Cheverly, leading its Peace initiative.

Bonnie Priebe and MacDougal and Florence Heacock are celebrating their birthdays this month.

After lunch announcements included the introduction of the election process for LLF corporate members. Faye Codding was delayed due to traffic, but upon her arrival, the slate was elected by affirmation. This year at the annual meeting, John and Bonnie Priebe will be honored this year for their years of service.

Bonnie announced that today's speaker will be speaking at the WELCA convention next week in Rockville. She also shared that the First Trinity bees swarmed away, perhaps shy after The Lutheran ran an article about them. There are two new hives, with 30,000 bees, blessed last Sunday. The honey is sold and contributed to Lutheran Disaster Relief funding. Florence noted that the District of Columbia has a beekeeper and there are hives all over the District.

Carolyn Sowinski announced that \$122,000 will be going out in checks at the end of April to those who are recipients of Gifts of Hope. Next October 18th, the Eighteenth Street Singers will be presenting a benefit concert for Gifts of Hope.

Dave Lambert, our webmaster, is also webmaster of the National Day of Prayer on the West Lawn of the Capitol on May 7, 4:30 – 6:30. (*see attached*)

Joyce Lang spoke about the Cheverly peace project. May is Peace Month, and each day that month has some activity related to peace, which begins within each of us. Little Friends of Peace is an organization that each summer holds peace camps for young kids. She extended an invitation to us to focus on peace.

Chaplain David Berg announced the next several months of meetings. He then told a story about a senior citizen pondering on “getting old.”

Opening Devotion

Dave Lambert focused on Maundy Thursday and led attendees through a prayer of confession based on John 13: 34-35. (*see attached*)

Introduction of Speaker

Bonnie Priebe introduced our speaker, Gail Hambleton, whom she met through the Synodical Women’s group. Gail Hambleton is the Vice President of the Global Peace Foundation-USA. She works specifically as the Director of Interfaith Partnerships, and the National Director of the Safe Haven Campaign, Interfaith Alliance to Abolish Human Trafficking. Ms. Hambleton has worked for decades in various International NGOs, many of which were involved in interfaith peace efforts. She lived and worked in Africa for eight years serving in the mission and humanitarian aid fields. Her passion for peace is rooted in her difficult experiences during the war in Zimbabwe, the military coup in Kenya, and the aftermath of genocide in Rwanda. Ms. Hambleton was instrumental in establishing the humanitarian aid organization "Women for Women" in Rwanda, in 1997. Ms. Hambleton started the Safe Haven Campaign in 2013 which is now active in 8 states. Gail is the mother of three beautiful children, and lives with her husband in Virginia. She works in Lanham, MD

Presentation – Human Trafficking, Safe Haven Campaign

Ms. Hambleton opened by thanking us for attending a meeting on a difficult subject. She works with the Global Peace Foundation, an international NGO that has 15 chapters worldwide. She began the Safe Haven Campaign to work to end human trafficking – “an egregious debasement of humanity.” She looked around and found many organizations getting engaged in the issue, but didn’t see the faith community engaged enough. She had a dream, “what if ALL faith communities took this on to education ourselves, and become catalysts for change.” Eleven congregations were represented today. Most raised hands indicating they were familiar with the issue.

Human trafficking is not just something that happens overseas. Last year the United States Department of Justice (DOL) gave a \$1 million grant to Fairfax County to address the issue. The U.S. is the biggest destination country in the world for trafficked persons.

Ms. Hambleton showed a slide of a girl with a bar code tattooed on her shoulder, thus showing how girls and women are sold as a commodity. She hopes that we will know more about what to look for, as community tips are important in accessing victims. The grant to Fairfax involves a full time detective in Arlington, and integration of information into the school curriculum. 141 leads were received in one year.

What can we do? A lot. 103 victims were recovered in Northern VA based on community tips. 17% of the leads were gang related. In the past, gangs relied on the sale of drugs for their income, now they are relying on selling girls.

In 2000 the first federal anti-trafficking law was passed, but doesn't help in the local jurisdictions. However, the law has created a network of local and national organizations that don't usually work together. It also was the first law to name pimps as human traffickers. Local laws are being created as a result of this networking. In these cases the victims are the ones arrested, not those who "buy" them.

Prevention, Prosecution, and Protection are the three "P's" that guide this work. People tend to get involved in crises. Our speaker showed a slide of a billboard mounted in Alabama between two schools that recruited girls to work in summer jobs by "dating a sugar daddy." Traffickers work college registration lines, knowing students need extra money. They also troll mall food courts. The faith community is important to prevention.

The FBI has rescued 2,700 children since 2003. One sting rescued 100 children, many of whom had not even been reported missing. This population is a mix of U.S. and foreign born children. Foster children who run away are often not reported as missing, and many of them have been sexually abused. Today's pop culture glorifies pimps, and serves to lure young women into "the life."

Many victims don't acknowledge themselves as victims and a kind of "Stockholm Syndrome" develops. Because of the internet, men can now order up a girl online and meet her in a hotel.

The Polaris website gives lots of information on state human trafficking laws and services. Unfortunately, many victims get channeled into juvenile justice systems and therefore get a record.

There are red flags for identifying victims. One should never approach a perceived victim with a man with her. Rather, **report it to the Hotline number 1-888-373-7888.** Churches are often one of the first places victims will present for help. Are our staff trained to be sensitive to them and know where to refer them? It was suggested that this number can be on church websites. Safe Haven only focuses on prevention and awareness, not on services. It was suggested that people put the hotline number in their phones to readily be able to report suspected incidences.

Closing Devotion

David Berg offered a closing prayer and benediction along with an Easter blessing.