

Lutheran Lay Fellowship of Metropolitan Washington DC



LUNCHEON MEETING Thursday, June 4, 2015 – 12:00 noon

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

Opening Announcements

President Bob Sargeant called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. He announced that two LLF Scholarships were awarded to students who happened to be members of Prince of Peace Lutheran Churches, although one is LCMS in Springfield, VA, and one is ELCA in Gaithersburg, MD. One recipient is a male, one a female. Additional information was sent to the membership this month.

As is the usual practice, Bob asked for those present to share if they were celebrating a birthday or anniversary this month. Three birthdays and an anniversary were celebrated with our singing the “Happy Birthday Song” to “All Good Lutherans.”

Several members shared their experience attending the funeral of long time member Sue Schmidt, former note-taker and wife of former LLF Chaplain Larry Schmidt. The service included six eulogies interspersed with musical offerings. Both the service and the repast were full to over-flowing.

There was some discussion of this meeting’s small attendance (six) in relation to the luncheon reservations, so there was an abundance of food. Discussion included the matter of some members not receiving email notices, noting that the meeting is regularly held on the first Thursday of the month, so the purpose of the sparse attendance remained unclear. All present sat at one table, making the “round table discussion” of the meeting’s topic real as well as virtual.

Opening Devotion

Bob offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the food and many blessings of fellowship.

Speaker

No speaker was scheduled for this meeting which was scheduled to be a conversation regarding the future of LLF.

Discussion

After lunch, Bob convened the table into discussion. He hearkened back to the year-ago meeting which focused on strategic planning for LLF. Since then Bob has been holding discussions with people to gain feedback that would inform our future thinking. He noted that on some occasions we did not have enough food for all those attending, on other occasions, vice versa. One recent well-attended meeting brought a “following” of the speaker by people who knew her and her work. He suggested we think about doing joint meetings with other similar organizations.

Bob noted that he is a mission interpreter for the ELCA in this area. In a recent meeting with the ELCA Bishop, Bob felt a good measure of support for the LLF, especially as a vehicle for working across judicatory lines. The Bishop invited Bob to attend the Synod Council meetings. Bob also received an invitation from the Bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, who is interested in finding ways for laypeople to be involved in the ministries of the church. LLF’s boundaries changed somewhat after the merger which formed the ELCA. It was suggested we send copies of our minutes to him.

Another conversation was with Summer Parrish of LSS/NCA, who was interested in helping families. She noted that the timing of the meeting is difficult for working people and families. She suggested we provide day-care, think about topics of interest to mothers, such as paid maternity leave. Someone raised the entire matter of family leave, for care-giving to older family members. There was a side discussion of geographic restrictions set by some resource agencies. Summer suggested we gather people of diverse age in a restaurant around a topic such as “Beer and Shakespeare.”

Faye Coddling, among others, is involved in advocacy at all levels: local, state, federal. The Lutheran Office of Governmental Affairs (LOGA) is one possible program resource. The Cuba policy change is something that we might want to look at in terms of impact on us and opportunity for us.

Ellie Wegner’s discussion looked at the 2017 Reformation anniversary “doings.” Keeping a calendar of events and inviting people to attend a dinner and discussion around it. Another option would be a guided trip to Rome, or Lutherland (Germany), or England to explore Anglican and Methodist, or Bethlehem, PA, founded by Moravians. Another trip might be to Cuba.

Certain issues continued to arise:

- Communication
- Time of the Meeting
- Place of the Meeting

How far in advance should announcements come out? Do program announcements need to be tied to the past month's meeting notes? There is an online resource, DC Vine, that could be set up for members only, in which people could quickly go in and get the latest news. Between-meeting notices could be sent out, such as announcements of members passing and funeral details. How to maximize the LLF/Fellowship Square Corporate Membership relationship was also discussed.

Are there any special interest groups within LLF? Is there a possibility of doing a video for wider dissemination of our programs? One congregation, Augustana, DC, videos its services and posts them on YouTube for members who live or work abroad, and has attracted viewers from several countries.

The timing of the meeting is problematic for non-retirees or people who have children at home. The geographic boundaries separated by the Potomac River are a factor. The historic luncheon meeting might not be the future main offering of LLF. Evening meetings compete with congregation meetings and rush-hour traffic.

Fred Klein asked, "what is our target audience?" If we try to reach out to the general population we will miss everybody. Young families "simply don't have time." Older church groups are dwindling. Time usage patterns are changing. Women/mothers don't go out at night. What is the best time for which age group? How do we interpret our mission to congregations?

Bob thinks the next step is to look at the various suggestions or opportunities to gather new demographic groups. Approaching younger people should not include the word "Lutheran." Gatherings should include food (and some traditional Lutheran beverages.) Rather than individual topics, an overall topic/theme could be a series. Travel could be part of a series or travel as mission trips. Ministry in Daily Life and the concept of Discipleship was discussed. The Leadership issue – current officers have been in place for six years. How does that pass on? Finally, have we outgrown our viability?

Conversation turned to parallels between LLF and Lutheran congregational life in many places. Change is challenging. More discussion is to continue to build on the input we've received. There is a lot of competition of people's time and interest.

Closing

The meeting ended with no clear topic for a July meeting. An August meeting is to focus on Our Faith in Daily Life, for which the speaker is traveling from PA, for no remuneration. It is hoped that attendance will be worth his trip.