

Lutheran Lay Fellowship of Metropolitan Washington DC



LUNCHEON MEETING Thursday, March 7, 2013 – 12:00 noon

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

Opening Announcements

Bob Sargeant called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. by noting this month is important because it holds Easter this year. Barbara Solt and Ellie Wegner celebrate birthdays this month. There were no anniversaries. There was one “returning guest” who was active in Luther League and came because of the program topic today.

The Fellowship Square annual meeting is next month. LLF elects Corporate Members, and members interested in serving in this way are asked to step forward, as elections will be held next month. George, LLF Acting Executive Director distributed proposed by-laws that will be acted upon at their annual meeting. Changes were recommended at the last annual meeting. One item relates to enabling contractual services. Questions may be directed to David Harman, Bob Sargeant, or John Priebe. Pr. Schmidt noted at 11 potential corporate members have been identified, with 26 needed. This involves one meeting.

Carolyn Sowinski announced that she has started a new blog related to Gifts of Hope and other things. The participating organizations have been invited to send items of interest. Bob Sargeant noted that people who have not paid 2013 dues will be dropped from the membership list and announcements as of this month.

Ellie Wegner reminded of the church-based employment program. She is training a new Executive Director. Also, Georgetown Lutheran has a memoir-writing class. She is leading a tour of England and Scotland in October.

The ELCA Metro DC synod is hosting a trip to Wittenburg Germany this July. St. Luke’s is offering a violin concert for the benefit of Habitat for Humanity. Pr. David Berg announced that next month’s speaker is Dr. Clarke Lobenstine, speaking on “Something of God.” Pr. Carmelo Santos of will speak in May, and President John Denninger of the LCMS Southeastern District will speak in June. David prefaced the presentation with excerpts from an article he wrote on “living longer.” A lot depends on “a matter of perspective.”

Devotions

Chaplain Schmidt led “Sing to the Lord a New Sing” and spoke on next Sunday’s Gospel on the “two sons and their father,” noting it could just as well be “two daughters and their mother.” In Christ there is a new creation. Everything has become new. With today’s topic we look at the passing of old order and the development of new ministries. With a “third Reformation” we embrace our humanity. We need to start thinking “and Jesus became a mammal.” He came to redeem the whole creation, not just people. What is our role in that kind of scenario? How will we engage our youth in this movement? In the Gospel story, the old man waited for the younger man to return.

Introduction of Speaker

“Whatever Happened to Luther League, Part 2” was the subject of our speaker, the Rev. Dr. Maria Erling, professor of Modern Church History and Global Missions at Gettysburg Seminary with a special focus on American Lutheranism and the various ways that mission has been understood in the history of the church. She received her Bachelor's degree at Augustana College, her Master's of Divinity at Yale and her Doctorate at Harvard Divinity School. She lives in Gettysburg with her husband John Spangler, who serves on the seminary staff. They have two daughters, Marta and Johanna.

Presentation

Dr. Erling presented at LLF some two years ago, about the demise of the ELCA Luther League in 1968. Since then she has reviewed the LCMS Walther League, which she likened to “the canary in the mine” that presaged the “convulsions” that affected the LCMS. Youth in the 1960’s were not so interested in the Leagues’ activities. She drew on three books for her talk: *Hopes and Dreams of All* by John Pahl which tells the story of the LCA’s youth movement; James Burkee’s *Power and Politics, and the Missouri Synod*; and *Disturbing the Peace of the Church* by Molly Schultz Bogh which relates the ALC history of the heresy trial of their youth activities board.

She quoted Bishop Medardo Gomez of El Salvador that “you can’t keep politics out of the church. Each church body at this time of political upheaval was concerned with “inerrancy” and all were fraught with internal political factionalization. Yet the youth, themselves, were in communication across church-body lines at the time. 1960-to early 1980 was the time-frame for a series of Lutheran church-body mergers. This was a time of considerable change in leadership, no longer based on old family and cultural ties. Confidence and trust in judgment in leaders, who were not as well-known, were not so strong as before.

The 1961 gathering of the ALC Luther League had the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as speaker, at a time when he was considered a very controversial political figure. Malcolm Boyd addressed their next gathering. And Walther Reuther of the Autoworkers Union spoke at the next gathering. Dr. Erling noted at this time most LL members were of high school age, whereas the League was originally geared to “20-somethings.” The Lutheran World Federation defines youth as up to age 30. But there was concern for those of age between Confirmation and graduation, which became “Junior Luther League.”

The ULC had Mahalia Jackson at their convention as part of an effort to expose their youth to a wider range of culture. Both the LCA and the ALC in the 60’s began to demonstrate its intent to no longer be Euro-centric cultural entities, but open to all. Dr. Erling’s presentation included a number of historic photos documenting these changes. In 1968 the Luther League board voted to dissolve itself because it was “too bureaucratic” and could better be handled in local congregations in service and support. Other major protestant church body youth groups were evolving similarly. Dr. Erling expressed that the current issue of opening rosters to homosexual persons was tame in relationship to the turmoil of this time.

At the conclusion of her talk she announced that Gettysburg Seminary is holding a seminar relating to the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. There is a grant to cover expenses for congregations to send groups to attend. April 15-20.