



February 3, 2026

President Bill Pfeifer called the meeting to order & led us in the Pledge of Allegiance

Rod Booker – God Bless America

Invocation – John Wohlin

Sgt. At Arms – Mark Barnhart reported that we had 33 members in attendance and three guests: Judy Cross was hosted by Kevin Thomas; Matthew Conner was hosted by Debby King and Kara Gardner was hosted by Ken Bissell.

TODAY'S PROGRAM:

Dr. Bill Pfeifer was our speaker today. He gave a presentation about the significance of February 3, otherwise known as Four Chaplains Day. On February 2, 1943, the USAT Dorchester was carrying 902 service men, merchant seamen and civilian workers. This vessel, converted from being a luxury coastal liner, was steadily sailing across the waters of Newfoundland toward an American base in Greenland. Traveling through these waters during WWII was especially treacherous as the German U-boats were always traveling through the area, looking to sink every Allied ship.



There were supposed to be 5 Chaplains aboard this ship but one was kept in Boston to perform a wedding ceremony, as a replacement for the original minister, at the last minute. That chaplain was then going to travel in the next convoy. So, the remaining chaplains, Lt. Fox (Methodist), Lt Goode (Jewish), Lt Washington (Roman Catholic), and Lt Poling (Dutch Reformed) set off with the Dorchester.

At 12:55 a.m., on February 3, 1942, the Dorchester was torpedoed. The captain gave to orders for everyone to abandon ship. During the pandemonium, as lifejackets became scarce, each of these Chaplains selflessly gave up their personal lifejackets to others. Of the 902 passengers, there were only 230 survivors. Survivors in nearby rafts could see the four chaplains arm linked and braced against the slanting deck. Their voices could also be heard offering prayers and singing the Navy Hymn. These four men became an enduring example of extraordinary faith, courage, and selflessness.

This story has been very special to Bill Pfeifer, as his father was the fifth Chaplain, and was saved from certain peril because of the last minute replacement for the wedding in Boston.

CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Al Lazar received his official plaque for being chosen the Rotarian of the Year.