

Essex Churches Together

An interfaith movement to help those in need in Essex County

October 2003

Who Are We ?

In May of 2004 Tappahannock Presbyterian Church invited 7 churches to meet and discuss the need for an ecumenical approach to serving residents of Essex County. Attendees immediately identified numerous needs and an overwhelming sense of not having enough resources within any one church to meet those needs. It was decided after a couple of meetings to extend the invitation, through pastors and designated church members, to all churches in Essex County to send a representative to the next meeting to discuss this further.

After four meetings participating churches include the Presbyterian Church, Antioch Baptist, Angel Visit Baptist, Beale Baptist, Mt. Zion Baptist, St. John's Baptist, St. John's Episcopal, St. Timothy's Catholic, Tappahannock Memorial Methodist, Upper Essex Baptist, and Vauter's Episcopal.

Each time we meet our purpose and possibilities are becoming more defined, but broadly stated, Essex County churches are gathering together to better use our limited resources to help each other.

Guest speakers have included representatives from Meals-on-Wheels and Essex Social Services. Similar ecumenical efforts in other counties have been described by speakers. We are continuing to educate ourselves about agencies and resources already in place as we determine where and how we can make a difference.

Why Are We Here?

At the very first meeting it was agreed that the same people in the churches do everything and that there is more to do than any of us can do alone. There is concern about the lack of volunteers available within all of the churches. No one present wanted another project. "Good things" are done through community clubs such as Lions Club or Rotary, or our school alma maters, or places where we work.

The difference, we feel, is that we have been *called by God* as members of His Church to answer needs and demonstrate His love to our neighbors.. What *Essex Churches Together* does will not be done in the name of a school or club, but in the name of Jesus Christ. And what we will do together is multiplied many times over what we could do as individual churches. God has called us in community.

What Are We Doing ?

While we search for our mission we are already involved in some projects:

- ❖ We are sponsoring a canned food drive October 9 that will be used to stock the pantry at Antioch Baptist Church, from which at least 40 families are fed each month. This is in response to the depleted supplies at the Central Virginia Food Bank in Richmond.
- ❖ We are communicating to other churches about Christian Community Fellowship (see article)

- ❖ We communicated to other churches about the Red Cross organizational meeting held in August.
- ❖ We are developing a *Resource Directory* to be used by all churches in guiding people toward help.
- ❖ We are recruiting drivers for the Monday Meals-on-Wheels Route in Dunnsville.

What Do We Plan To Do?

Each time we meet we become more directed to the path this group should take. That decision has not yet been made. It will take more meetings, more prayers, more speakers, more volunteers, more input of all kinds before we have decided how we will operate.

Meanwhile, churches in Essex County are asked to consider participating in this ecumenical movement. Meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday evening of each month. Kathy Hughes is chairing this group. Call her (443-2198) for more information about the time and place.

If you would like more information about our previous meetings call Alice Roye (443-2021). Alice has prepared this newsletter from previous Minutes.

Expenses of postage and stationery are being covered by the Presbyterian Church at the present. If your church would like to make a donation of stamps this would be appreciated. Call Kathy about this.

What's Going On In Your Church?

If you have special services or programs going on at your church please let Alice know (alicer@inna.net) and this can be shared in this newsletter which will be published quarterly. We hope to encourage participation not only within your church but between churches and to those out in the community who do not yet have a church home.

Christian Community Fellowship Open to All

Christian Community Fellowship (CCF) was initially started as an effort to provide a safe place for Christian Fellowship for young people. Debra Wind arranged to use the Mt. Zion Baptist Fellowship Hall on the second Sunday evening of each month. They meet at 5:00 PM for discussion and conversation about what is going on in the community and what activities are planned. Much of the conversation revolves around their next outing or activity. Sometimes it is a trip to a concert or a theme park, or sometimes it is an activity at the church. These occur the first and third week-ends of the month

After conversation everyone goes at 5:20 to a small group, determined by age, for a guided discussion of the group's choice, which differ depending on the ages and interests of the group. Parents and grandparents began staying after bringing their children, and the group has quickly grown to 100-125 people of all ages and different denominations, or no church affiliation

From 6-7:00 PM everyone eats together and then goes home.

Other churches are invited to support this activity. They could provide a meal, or provide transportation either to CCF or to an activity. Word of mouth about CCF will make this available to **all youth in our community**, a priority need identified by *Essex Churches Together*. Another church could host this group in the future, but it is suggested that it be done a year at a time to provide consistency.

Essex Churches Together will continue exploring how we can help to expand this opportunity. Meanwhile, for more information call Debra Wind at 443-4971.

Did you Know?

Essex Social Services will reimburse volunteers mileage money if they will take residents to Richmond or elsewhere for medical treatment? There may be members of YOUR Church who would serve this way.

For more information call Theresa Thrall, DSS at 443-3561