



The Virginia
United
Methodist

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Advocate

'A Day of Holy Conversation'

*Sitting down together to discuss
human sexuality issues*



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Community of Faith UMC, partners feed those in need

More than 16 years ago, the Rev. Dr. Rob Vaughn began his ministry at Community of Faith (COF) United Methodist Church near Herndon. During his first year he felt the congregation needed a program or service project in which they could unite, which would be of benefit to the community and for which the church might become known.

Following prayerful requests for guidance and discernment, Rev. Vaughn received a call from Linda Wimpey, founder of FACETS, founded in 1988 to respond to the diverse needs of people impacted by poverty in Fairfax County. Wimpey was in search of

a church willing to host a food ministry for those in need in western Fairfax County. Vaughn's immediate response was "Yes!" He later realized the church had no experience and limited facilities but knew this was what the congregation and community needed.

Celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, COF has partnered with FACETS and Western Fairfax Christian Ministry to offer a food distribution program for the needy of Fairfax County and surrounding jurisdictions. The clients are persons who need food – what they receive means there is money to pay for rent or utilities or gas to get to one of multiple jobs. As one client said, "The food I received each week saved my life. I was able to focus on getting my life together, not worrying about

food." Some families are in need because they have recently been homeless. Some have been victims of domestic violence, and some have experienced a health crisis without insurance. A few are new to the U.S.; many are single parents. The vast majority are employed at one or multiple jobs.

What began as a small stream of 10 to 15 families coming weekly to get canned goods and meats donated by local vendors and distributed initially by a few volunteers has grown to more than 100 families shopping weekly. They receive produce (when available), breads and pastries, canned goods, frozen vegetables, dairy products, and selections of frozen chicken, pork and beef. In addition, child care is offered for clients while they shop.

The COF Food Pantry is now an operation receiving food most days of the week and distributing upwards of a million dollars in donated food yearly. COF has become the benefactor of "Scouting for Food," one of the largest food collections in the Washington, D.C., metro area. "Food collected will stay in the community and help neighbors in need like patrons of the Food Pantry of Community of Faith in Franklin Farm," said Rory Maynard, Scout liaison for the church.

"I've estimated nearly 15,000 food items were donated, filling more than 400 boxes for the food

Members at Community of Faith UMC sort food from local providers such as Giant, Food Lion, MOM's Organic Market, Trader Joe's, Bob Evans, Chipotle, KFC, Famous Dave's, Starbucks and others. Next page, recipients wait in the sanctuary to shop for food.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



ministry," said Vaughn, an Eagle Scout himself.

From the beginning, Giant in Franklin Farm provided food for the ministry. Recently, Giant donated a truckload of food and other items to the church. A portion of the food is being stored in a newly constructed storage building which the COF congregation, local Scouting groups and others raised funds to build. In addition to food storage, Scout organizations will store equipment and supplies there.

"Although Fairfax County is considered among the most prosperous in the nation, there are still many who will go

hungry without the food we distribute each week," Vaughn said. According to Vaughn, a donation like Giant's and those received from other local partners like the Scouts are vital to the ability of the church to feed recently more than 100 families per week. In addition, during Thanksgiving week last year, more than 130 families were served. It is expected that number will grow to 150 or more.

"The large stock of non-perishable food donated by Giant," Vaughn added, "goes a long way to meeting food requirements for Thanksgiving and Christmas and well into next year."

Vaughn says he is thankful his congregation has been joined by another faith community in the area. The Franklin Farm neighborhood Epiphany Episcopal Church congregation is helping through financial support as well as providing volunteers to set up the Food Pantry, to distribute food to the clients and in other ways serve those in need each week. Scott Meyer, treasurer and a member of the church's Vestry, noted that, like COF years earlier, Epiphany had sought the opportunity to bond as a congregation and help others; the partnership with COF filled that need.

Rev. Hillary West, priest-in-charge at Epiphany Episcopal Church, often works at the Food Pantry offering words of support to clients.

She says they are thankful through the generosity of the community and others the Food Pantry is available for all those who need it. According to Rev. West, a guest at the pantry told her she thanks God for the food pantry at Community of Faith.

Nearby Floris UMC receives items from the COF food ministry to supplement its monthly food distribution.

In addition to Giant, Community of Faith receives food donations from local providers including Food Lion, MOM's Organic Market, Trader Joe's, Bob Evans, Starbucks, KFC, Chipotle and Famous Dave's.

Community of Faith UMC is located at 13224 Franklin Farm Road at the intersection with Fairfax County Parkway.

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