



Interfaith Conference on Childhood Hunger

Hosted by the Virginia Synod, ELCA
Saturday 27 August 2016 from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
St. Michael Lutheran Church
Blacksburg, Virginia 22980

Initial Synthesis from Recorded Thoughts...

Conference Schedule

- 11:00 - 11:15 - Welcome and Introductions
- 11:15 - 11:30 - Review of 2015-2016 Actions
- 11:30 - 11:45 - 2016-2017 Planning Ideas
- 11:45 - 12:00 - Assignment of Regional Coordinators
- 12:00 - 12:30 - Panera's Sandwich Lunch and discussions
- 12:30 - 2:00 - Weekend Backpack Program Workshop

Review and Plans. The conference reviewed activities over the course of 2015-2016 and planned future actions for 2016-2017. We noted that October 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and encourage all congregations of all faith traditions to use the year prior to this milestone in human history to help create conditions for the physical, intellectual, and spiritual health of future generations. Providing nourishing food for children through the family of faith is an enabling activity. We seek to enable [education, employment, and example](#) as our strategic goals in overcoming food insecurity across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Our review and plans are recorded below of our lines of advance:

Breakfast in the Classroom

- **Review.** Universal Breakfast in Schools legislation for the Commonwealth of Virginia was the emphasis of our Second Conference in November of 2015 and subsequent meetings led by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP). While the Interfaith Conference achieved general consensus to move forward to pursue such legislation, the timing was not right for this past year in finding legislative support without endangering the Governor's budget increase for Universal Breakfast start-up support which was doubled in the current year from years past.
- **Plans.** House Resolution 5003 is the proposed federal [Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016](#). While the Bill provides a number of advances in the stewardship of child nutrition and education apportioned resources (such as increased eligibility thresholds, increased reimbursement rates for breakfast, relief from congregant requirements for summer feeding, and five year funding authorization for the WIC program) many are concerned about an innovative block-grant experiment which allows three states to apply for grants without significant federal oversight. The Bill has been reported out of committee as amended, and all are encouraged to review the [amended Bill](#) once it is posted and contact your legislators to express your thoughts.
- **Plans.** While legislators and elected executive leaders of the Commonwealth and of the Nation debate on the best courses of action for the state to take in this matter, the church will emphasize the moral imperative of feeding all our children in order to provide all an equal opportunity for learning each day in school. Bishop Mauney is approaching his colleagues with

a missive planned to be signed by a number of bishops and delivered to the Governor and leaders of the Virginia Legislature in October 2016. A key element of this message is that the church is setting the example by taking steps to offer breakfast (meal or snack) as part of all church sponsored school programs.

Summer Feeding Programs

- **Review.** Our area of emphasis in the spring of 2016 was on educating congregations about possibilities for integrating meals with Vacation Bible School and other summertime activities. We gathered regional representatives in Richmond with the Governor's program manager for the No Kid Hungry program, and then we held five regional summer food services program orientation sessions. These five sessions, held in Abingdon, Roanoke, Waynesboro, Fredericksburg, and Richmond brought together local congregational leaders with leaders from regional food banks. We noted that there was great interest and energy from those who participated, and many new initiatives were launched after this effort.
- **Plans.** We will repeat this year's emphasis next year, but begin the regional orientation sessions in February and March to give congregations more time to prepare for the summer of 2017.

Weekend Backpack Programs

- **Review.** One of the ideas we published on our website this past year was for congregations to initiate [weekend meal programs](#) in cooperation with local schools. Weekend programs deliver bags of food to schools on Friday for issue to identified children to take home with them over the weekend. We intentionally met on 27 August at St. Michael in Blacksburg so we could learn more about their very mature and successful [Micah's Backpack](#) program, a part of [Micah's Caring Initiative](#) sponsored by the congregation. Micah's Backpack started in 2008 with 6 parishioners around a table in the Fellowship Hall agreeing to try and provide food for 5 children at a local school each week to help carry them through the weekend. The program has grown to where it now serves 279 children weekly in the Blacksburg area. Thanks to Pastor John Werts for hosting our meeting on 27 August and for helping us understand the many varied ministries of St. Michael Lutheran Church...an example for other congregations to follow!



- **Plans.** Weekend feeding programs is our area of special emphasis this Fall. We will expand use of social media and e-mail marketing to raise awareness of programs like Micah's and encourage other congregations to start similar initiatives as they plan their 2017 activities and budgets. Of note, Micah's Caring Initiative is not federally funded -- the community around Blacksburg provides all necessary support. Best practices will be shared via commentary on Facebook posts to create a best practice blog and encourage mutual support between young and mature program initiatives throughout the Commonwealth.

New Moms, Infants, and Toddlers

- **Review.** The mature and highly successful federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program continues to support young families throughout the Commonwealth as administered through the Virginia Department of Health. See <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell/programs/wic/>
- **Plans.** We plan to increase our advertising for this program through expanded use of social media and by posting information on bulletin boards of our congregations.

Children on the Fringes of Community

- **Review.** We have made inquiries through Virginia State Police but have not had much success in this area.
- **Plans.** We hope to host a conference on this topic in the Summer of 2017, probably in the Charlottesville area. We will explore the possibility of including academia in this conference with a variety of speakers to draw interest from both church and state.

NEW INITIATIVE: REGIONAL COORDINATORS

For October 2016 through October 2017 -- a one year commitment -- we are looking for people who will serve as regional coordinators throughout Virginia. A regional coordinator will help facilitate regional orientation sessions throughout their assigned region bringing together congregations to share best practices and innovations in taking action to address childhood hunger. Coordinators are needed in these general areas with a radius of 60 miles from:

Norfolk | Richmond | Fredericksburg | Winchester | Staunton | Roanoke | Abingdon

If you are willing to serve in this role, please contact us:

virginiafeedskids@vasynod.org

Thanks!