

June 2018

“...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me”

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” Matthew 25: 34, 40 (NIV)

Seven folks representing families who are recipients of our Backpack Food Ministry and 12 representatives from Skipwith Elementary School (teachers, staff and administrators) joined 16 of our Skipwith Church family for our **DINNER & CONVERSATION** event on Friday, May 11th.

Thanks to each person who participated in such vital ways: making scrumptious sauce, donating food, setting up tables and chairs, cleaning up, lending cornhole boards, providing crafts, decorating, serving our guests, intentionally engaging our guests in conversation, donating money for supplies, preparing survey materials, ordering Skipwith UMC T-shirts, making signs, making phone calls, working in the kitchen, playing games, and more!

While the turn-out was lighter than last year, we continued the important and enriching work of building trust and good-will with members of our community. Plus, we nurtured relationships within our church family as we worked alongside one another in the common purpose of expressing hospitality, welcome and friendship to and with our guests. It was especially good to see some of our newest church members find their place in the various workings of this ministry.

We also gained some insights from our conversations and our information surveys: 1) Food insecurity is a critical challenge during the summer months which is why we are working to expand our feeding ministry into July and August, 2) In families where English is a second language (ESL), help is needed to fill out forms and applications for jobs, public resources, clubs, enrichment activities, etc., 3) There is a need for affordable childcare across the board (teachers, staff and community families), 4) ESL families need assistance in knowing their rights.

Two Christmases ago, we worked with Skipwith Elementary School to welcome and facilitate the resettlement of five refugee families. We helped to provide furniture, kitchenware, bedding, clothing and food. Refugee families are given seven months of public assistance (food stamps, medical attention, tutoring)

during which time they are to learn English well enough to navigate the various avenues of community life . . . a daunting challenge, to say the least. I believe that there is much more that we can do to embrace them so that they know support and friendship in our midst. Please make a covenant to pray with me, asking God to reveal ways by which we may accomplish this in the days ahead.

“I was a stranger, and you welcomed me ...” (Mt. 24:35)

~PASTOR TODD