Mutually Blessed

Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church, located in Richmond’s east end, has seen many changes in its community through the years. Many members have left the once thriving church to move out into the suburbs. Those still remaining recognized that with ample space, including a full-sized gymnasium, the church was in a good place to respond to the needs of the community. They began praying for opportunities for God to use them to serve their neighborhood.

A chance encounter brought Percy Strickland to the church. Strickland is the founder of Church Hill Activities and Training (CHAT), a 13-year-old organization that offers educational opportunities to the youth of Church Hill. CHAT oversees Church Hill Academy, an independent, Christian, coed high school aimed to help the community achieve academic success. The academy started elsewhere but had no dedicated space. The teachers had no place to call their own or to store their daily materials.

In early 2013, Strickland attended a basketball clinic at Carlisle Avenue, and he noticed the church’s facilities. Members introduced him to the pastor, Rev. Howard Germany, and he inquired about the possibility of moving the academy to the church. Rev. Germany
took the proposal to church members, who overwhelmingly voted in favor of the opportunity. “Even though there were questions along the way, we worked through matters as they came up, and the academy has found a real home for its mission,” Rev. Germany said.

About 40 students attend the high school. While Carlisle Avenue has not experienced a direct membership increase, the church has realized many blessings with their decision. Rev. Germany said, “Hosting the school has allowed us to have a bigger presence in the community. The neighborhood residents witness activity on our campus.”

Nearby families have visited their worship services. The academy’s dietitian, in addition to providing lunch for academy students, has taken the place of the long-gone kitchen committee and prepares meals for Wednesday night services. “She feels that she’s been blessed by the church,” Rev. Germany noted, “and she wants to bless our church with her gift of meal planning and preparation.”

Church Hill Academy pays rent and uses the church facilities year round on weekdays, which is a win-win. “The boiler has to run every day in the winter, regardless if anyone is in the building,” said Rev. Germany. “The academy helps us with a reason to do that.”

For more information about outreach ideas for your church, contact:
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