

**FORTY-FORTH
SOUTHERN CONFERENCE UCC
ANNUAL GATHERING
THE EASTERN VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL REPORT**

The 2009 New Year, not only gave us a new President with a “change” platform but also a challenge for a healthier economy. Although times are tight and money is slim, people and families are drawn closer together and “prayer” becomes the “order for the day.” Now, that’s a “good thing!” People stopped their hustle and bustle routines and looked for alternative methods to resolve problems.

The Eastern Virginia Association also took time to examine its “health” status. The prognosis -- two major areas that were causing problems and needed to be highlighted for the year were: communication and mission. The prescription to be filled became simple -- the Association would focus on improving communications and strengthening its Christian ministries within the Association and the Southern Conference. The Association must exercise daily, eat the proper foods, and maintain a healthy diet. If the directions and medications were not followed, the Association would suffer severe shock, becoming handicapped and if prolonged, even death. Therefore the following was put into action, immediately!

Our primary **mission and purpose** would be to help churches understand and grow in their Christian mission. **Three initiatives** were agreed upon: (1) To engage congregations in the UCC Congregational Vitality Initiative (CVI) which would include training selected EVA members as CVI coaches and providing regional CVI training; (2) To initiate an EVA Conflict Management Program which would train selected clergy and laity through the Community Mediation Center and working through Church and Ministry Commission to engage/resolve congregational conflict; and (3) To increase knowledge through EVA and UCC History and Polity by exporting the history and polity course to congregations regionally and training EVA clergy and laity to provide courses to congregations.

The Association has already started filling the prescription: doing new things- breaking new barriers through first-time projects; exercising through communications; eating and digesting the word of God daily.

- **Newsletter:** The rebirth of an EVA newsletter, “*The Voice of EVA.*” This monthly publication can connect congregations and encourage them to share Christian experiences, activities, projects, and ideas. Commission work can be exploited and hopefully, the development of a greater appreciation for the work of the Association. This is a great way to bring the churches together in an effort to understand our diversity. Copies of the newsletter can be accessed on the EVA website.
- **EVA Website** (eva-soc-ucc.org). This is the first time congregations can communicate and connect with each other on the web. Information will be placed on the web to keep members informed. Also, an EVA webmaster will setup websites for those churches that do not have internet. In this Technological/ Information Age, we do not want GOD’s people to perish because of the lack of knowledge.
- **EVA Cookbook.** Another first-time project for EVA. All church congregations within the Association are invited to submit recipes of their favorite dishes. The recipes will be combined into one cookbook. The cookbooks will be available for purchase to share across the Association. This will be a must have cookbook.
- **EVA Awards/Recognition Banquet.** Again, another first-time project for the Association. EVA will be working closely with the churches to spotlight those leaders and laity within the churches who have demonstrated their Christian mission through a “labor of love” and “service to GOD and man.” The banquet has been planned for Saturday, September 26, 2009 at Laurel Hill UCC in Holland, Virginia.

The Eastern Virginia Association will preserve its work throughout the 2009 church year fulfilling God’s work. As we continue, the health of the Association will improve and strengthen. The Diagnosis -- It is a great time to be alive and a great time to be a part of the Eastern Virginia Association and a great time to serve GOD! “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:13

EVA President

Submitted by Dr. Julia Avery Muse,