

## Together For Justice: A Call to Action

About sixty community members, elected representatives, and church leaders gathered at Shiloh Baptist Church, New Site, on Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, for an informational meeting regarding the protection of human rights. The first half of the meeting was a slide presentation on the history and excellent work of Prince William County's Human Rights Commission. The second half was a question and answer period that looked at establishing a similar organization in the Fredericksburg area over the next few years. Barbara Atkins, Chris Falter, and Linda Falter represented Trinity's Committee for Racial Healing at the event.

While the process of bringing a human rights advocacy organization into being may take some time, the speakers pointed out that there are several important steps that can be implemented now:

1. Education and awareness: We can develop a culture of listening, compassion, and willing advocacy for marginalized neighbors. We can inform ourselves about established advocacy groups, both as resources and models. We can seek to stay informed on current human rights infringements in our area and beyond.
2. We can prepare materials for disseminating information to those who may come to us needing help. Many are unfamiliar with their rights to fair and lawful treatment with regard to housing, employment, or access to services. Some may not be aware of advocacy resources such as the NAACP.
3. We can write to our local elected officials about our interest in a human rights commission for our area. If there is evidence of compelling need, we should communicate this as well. State legislators could be asked to support legislation allowing multiple counties in the same planning district to combine resources and form a joint commission. These are extremely important early steps in the overall process. (For your reference, most Trinity members are in planning district 16.)
4. We can intentionally connect with other like-minded churches (such as Shiloh). We are stronger when we come together to share encouragement, ideas, and resources.

*“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

John 13:35