

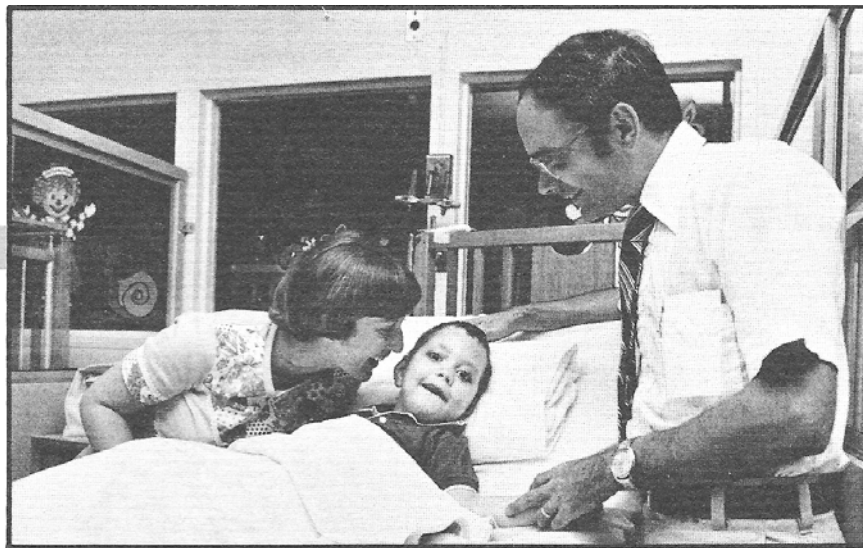
Edmarc Historical Notes

In 1978, two members of Suffolk Presbyterian Church, Dr. Allen Hogge and his wife, Joan, approached the pastor, the Reverend Edward Newell Page, with an idea for mission: Creating a system of care and support for families with terminally or gravely ill children.

The original intent, to build a nursing facility for such children, soon shifted to home healthcare, hospice care and bereavement support. Within months, the vision culminated in the creation of Edmarc Hospice for Children, Inc., the nation's first pediatric hospice.

For more than three years, the Hogges had been caring for their son, Marcus, who was dying of metachromatic leukodystrophy, a genetic neuromuscular disorder. Marcus, 6, had been healthy until he was nearly 3; then within three months, he could no longer walk or talk. Also caring for Marcus' two younger sisters, his parents searched for a long-term nursing center for children. The only one nearby, St. Mary's Children's Home in Norfolk, had a waiting list of more than one year. Rev. Page, 29 and a new father with a recurrence of a brain tumor originally discovered while he was in seminary, was enthusiastic about the Hogges' desire to help others in similar situations.

Through its Small Church Task Force, the Presbyterian Church USA was soliciting mission proposals from smaller congregations. In July 1978, with the blessing of the Session, the Hogges and Rev. Page recruited nine church members for a steering committee to explore ways to make their vision a reality. With the enthusiastic endorsement of Norfolk Presbytery (now the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia), the steering committee applied for and received a \$3,000 grant to



Dr. and Mrs. W. Allen Hogge and Marcus

cover the cost of a needs assessment.

The assessment discovered less need for a nursing facility than for a system of care and support for families caring for a terminally ill child. The focus shifted to training volunteers to provide respite care and emotional support, a concept that fit within the newly emerging hospice movement (authorized in Virginia by legal and regulatory changes in February 1978).

In September 1978, his cancer forced Rev. Page to resign from the ministry, leaving SPC after only 16 months as its pastor. He died the following April at the age of 30.

In November 1978, the directors incorporated Edmarc Hospice for Children, Inc. The name was a combination of Ed for Edward Page and Marc for Marcus Hogge. Marcus, not quite 8, died in February 1980.

Edmarc's first board of directors consisted of 10 members of Suffolk Presbyterian Church, including eight of the original steering committee members. They made many presentations to introduce Edmarc and the hospice concept to the community, which responded with overwhelming support.

By the end of 1979, Edmarc occupied space in Suffolk Presbyterian Church for offices and a day care center, offering parents the opportunity to leave their children (both ill and healthy) for short periods of respite. Aided by a grant from the Virginia Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, the board hired the Reverend Barbara Mease, also a registered nurse, as part time program director. She would prove invaluable in the coming years as director of professional services. The membership of the board of directors also began to reflect the wider community rather than being limited to members of Suffolk Presbyterian.

Expanding into early intervention and developmental disabilities, Edmarc dropped Hospice from its name and became Edmarc, Inc. in 1981.

A 1982 grant of \$300,000 from the Presbyterian Women's Birthday Offering and additional grants from the state resulted in a rapid expansion of staff and programs for Edmarc. That year, Allen and Joan Hogge moved from Suffolk, leaving Edmarc without their wonderful guidance. Early in 1983, the board hired Julie Simpson as the first executive director to oversee the expanded programs.

By the middle of 1983, the directors realized that Edmarc had lost focus on its original mission. The majority of staff effort and programs were concentrating on early intervention in a population primarily located in Western Tidewater. While still important, the hospice programs were secondary; they mainly served families in the larger cities to the east. The board decided that the solution was to split into two agencies.

A \$100,000 federal grant, the funding base for the early intervention program, enabled a new board of directors to create The Children's Center. Rev. Mease became its executive director, working with most of the previous Edmarc staff. For a time, the two agencies shared staff and space in Suffolk Presbyterian Church until the Children's Center moved to Franklin. That initiative has now grown to eight centers throughout Western Tidewater and Suffolk, serving over 1,200 children annually

Returning to its original focus, Edmarc, Inc. resumed use of the name Edmarc Hospice for Children. Edmarc eventually left Suffolk Presbyterian for larger, more centrally located quarters in Portsmouth. In recognition of its roots, Edmarc's charter still requires a member of Suffolk Presbyterian Church to sit on its board of directors. To date, Edmarc, has provided hospice care to more than 1,000 families throughout Hampton Roads

Today, we are dedicating a plaque, which commemorates the founding of Edmarc by this congregation. It is particularly appropriate that we do this on Pentecost Sunday, because God's use of tragic circumstances to produce long-term care and comfort to innumerable families in the Hampton Roads area can be explained by nothing less than the sweeping work of the Holy Spirit.