

Teens Coffee House .

By ED BERND JR.
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A minister, his congregation and a newcomer from Tampa have gotten their heads together and come up with a way to provide a new recreational facility for teens and hopefully strengthen their religious faith.

The idea is to have a coffeehouse with recreational items such as a ping pong table and whatever else the youngsters want.

Many local teens are eager to help put the project together, said the Rev. James Buckingham, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Mission in Eau Gallie.

A spot has been picked: the ballroom at the Imperial Hotel in downtown Eau Gallie.

"This is right next to the library," Rev. Buckingham explained enthusiastically. "The

kids can come to the coffeehouse after school to study and if they need reference books then they can go right next door."

"It's an ideal spot," agrees Larry Jones, recently moved to South Brevard from Tampa where he conducted a similar program.

The whole project won't cost local youngsters a cent, except for soft drinks and whatever else is sold in the "coffee shop."

The membership of Tabernacle Baptist Church has agreed to donate \$100 per month to the project.

Tuesday this was enough money — \$50 to rent the ballroom and \$50 for utilities and other expenses.

The complex will be staffed with volunteer help and it won't be open unless an adult is present.

But a hitch came Tuesday. Some last minute changes saw the rent figure double to \$100.

"Now we will have to go to the business community to raise another \$50 per month," Jones said.

"This will probably be a good thing," Rev. Buckingham said. "We can get more people involved this way."

This coffeehouse, recreation center complex isn't being established just for fun. Rev. Buckingham has some very definite ideas about it.

"This will give me a chance to counsel some of the youth here who need help and can't get it any other way," he explained.

"I would estimate," the minister continued, "that 85 per cent of the youth in South Brevard don't go to regular Sunday church services.

"The schools can no longer

teach that there is a God. Even the guidance counselors can't help students in this respect," he said. "They must remain completely secular."

Jones has the type of job that will enable him to drop in on the center frequently during the afternoon. He plans to supervise the operation.

"I will be able to refer kids to Jamie when they have a problem," Jones explained. "He can show them that religion is important."

"We are not trying to convert them to our religion," Rev. Buckingham pointed out. "We are not so interested in whether they go to a Baptist Church, or Methodist or Lutheran. We just want them to go to some church and my congregation understands this."

"We want to stress to these young people that they need

Bolstering the Faith

to realize that there is a God," Jones said.

Rev. Buckingham and Jones agree that they both had the seed of this idea for some time but were just waiting for someone who could help them get it going. The two men met at an Eau Gallie Exchange Club meeting, and their idea grew.

Now, if they can find the extra \$50 a month, they are ready to go.

They will get youngsters and adults together and start work, fixing up the old ballroom and the waterfront property behind the hotel.

"And we're leaving it up to the kids to decide how to do this," Jones said. "This will be their place, we are just giving them a helping hand."

Jones added that anyone else who wants to help the youngsters may certainly do so — with time, ideas or money.



A PLACE FOR YOUTH — The Rev. James Buckingham, left, and Larry Jones discuss plans for a new recreational facility for teenagers. Their ambitious project is backed by the Tabernacle Baptist Mission.

(Times Photo by Bernd)